

**PEOPLE ORDERED INDOORS**  
to break coronavirus transmission chain

**IF NOT HANDLED IN 21 DAYS,**  
can take you, your family back 21 years: Modi

**DOCTORS, NURSES, MEDIA**  
risking own life to save others, he says

# 1.3 billion, 21 days, lockdown is key



Modi addressing the nation Tuesday evening. PTI

**Don't step beyond your home's Lakshman Rekha, it's the only way out: PM**

**ABANTIKA GHOSH & LIZ MATHEW**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

ENFORCING THE longest stay-at-home order as health authorities try to break the coronavirus transmission chain, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a complete lockdown across the country for 21 days from Tuesday midnight. Underlining social distancing as the only way to deal with the outbreak threat, the Prime Minister, in his second address to the nation on the pandemic, said the lockdown "is like a curfew" and while "21 days of lockdown is a long time", "it is equally essential for your safety and that of your family...jaan hai toh jahaan hai".

With folded hands, Modi urged citizens to adhere to his

call, saying it is applicable to everyone — from the Prime Minister to a citizen in a village. "Currently, India is at a stage where our current actions will determine how much we are able to minimise the impact of this disaster."

"The next 21 days are of critical importance for us. As per health experts, a period of at least 21 days is extremely critical to break the infection chain of coronavirus. If the situation is not handled in these 21 days, the country and your family could go back 21 years. If the situation is not handled in these 21 days, several families will get devastated forever. Hence, you must forget what going out means for the next 21 days. Stay inside your home, stay inside your home, and do just one thing — stay inside your home," he said.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



Minutes after the announcement of a 21-day lockdown, people in Nerul, Navi Mumbai, made emergency purchases. Amit Chakravarty

**Modi assures essentials open; rules underline adherence, with threat of penal action**

**DIPANKAR GHOSE**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

SEVERAL STATES had announced a lockdown in the wake of the Sunday Janata curfew but Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of a 21-day lockdown from midnight Tuesday, under the Disaster Management Act, standardises and extends the shutdown across the country. In doing so, it signals the resolve of the government to en-

sure social distancing at a scale unprecedented in history coinciding with the increasing possibility that the pandemic could have entered Stage 3 — community transmission.

Within minutes of his address, there were reports of panic buying for groceries and provisions from across the nation which had, until then, hunkered down for a lockdown until March 31. But quick tweets from Modi attempted to assuage fears. "My fellow citizens, there is



absolutely no need to panic. Essential commodities, medicine etc would be available. the

Centre and various state governments will work in close coordination to ensure this," he said.

His next tweet seemed to acknowledge the confusion. "By converging around shops, you are risking the spread of COVID-19. No panic buying please. Please stay indoors. I repeat — the Centre and State governments will ensure all essentials are open."

This tweet referred to guidelines issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs — after the PM's

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

**Compliance norms eased for firms, FM says financial package 'sooner than later'**

**ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

FINANCE MINISTER Nirmala Sitharaman Tuesday announced a series of regulatory and compliance related relaxations for taxpayers, MSMEs, company directors and bank customers, but said the government was readying an economic package on priority in the wake of the coronavirus lockdown and would present it 'sooner than later'.

"Work is going on and we are very close to coming up with an economic package, which will be announced sooner rather than later," Sitharaman said. On the volatility in the financial markets, she said, "...all the regulators, the Reserve Bank and the Ministry of Finance are all working together... we are in contact... let me give you (that) assurance that monitoring is happening thrice a day."

Announcing a string of compliance-related relaxations, she said, "Many statutory and com-

**EXPLAINED**  
Why this is critical

FM'S DECISION to extend deadlines by three months for filing I-T returns, GST summary returns, Aadhaar-PAN linking, and also the *Vivaad se Vishwas* scheme, was critical. An economic package, that protects the bottom of the workforce pyramid, and helps companies at a time when both demand and supply have collapsed, is now awaited.

pliance issues, since we are in the month of March, we need to address. We have come up with comprehensive announcements in this regard."

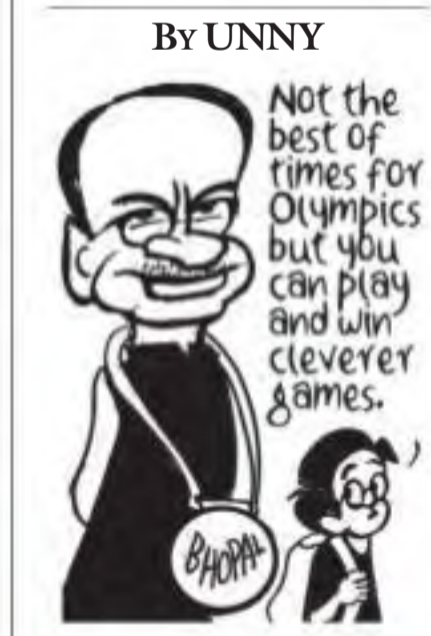
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**THE EDITORIAL PAGE**

**VIRUS IN A GLOBALISED INDIA**  
BY SANJAYA BARU  
PAGE 8

**BUSINESS AS USUAL**



**Trucks stuck, rail staff stopped, online delivery staff assaulted: Essential supplies hit hurdle**

**PRANAV MUKUL, AVISHEK G DASTIDAR & SURBHI GUPTA**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

AHEAD OF Prime Minister Narendra Modi announcing a 21-day countrywide lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19, long queues had formed on highways of trucks carrying essential goods and commodities, includ-

ing medicines, milk, fruits and vegetables, by Tuesday, hours into several states sealing borders. While goods trains fall in the exempted category, freight services too were hit as states did not mention 'Railways' as essential service in their respective orders.

With confusion at the lower levels about exemptions, transport even within states was hit. Big online grocers such as

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



At vegetable, fruit market in Sahibabad, near Delhi. Abhinav Saha

**INSIDE**



**10,000 CASES, 130 DEAD IN A DAY, U.S. MAY EXCEED EUROPE AS EPICENTRE**  
PAGES 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11

**Hours into Delhi lockdown, on 101st day of sit-in, Shaheen Bagh cleared, police cite curbs**

**SOMYA LAKHANI**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

EARLY TUESDAY morning, as the anti-CAA protest at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh entered its 101st day, the Delhi Police removed protesters and vacated the area citing the lockdown because of the coronavirus outbreak. Nine protesters, including six women, were detained after they refused to leave, said DCP (southeast) R P Meena.

"The SHO and ACP visited the site Monday evening and re-



The protest paraphernalia being removed. Abhinav Saha

quested protesters to leave as a lockdown had been implemented due to coronavirus, but everyone refused. In the morning, too, we asked them to leave, but when they didn't, coercive action had to be taken and people were detained," said Meena. Protesters were removed from the site around 7.30 am.

A map of India made of metal with 'Say No to NRC, CAA, NPR' written on it, the stage, and an India Gate installation at the protest site were dismantled and loaded into trucks. Posters on the

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

**Freed after 7 months, Omar: Virus fight first, will discuss J&K later**

**NAVEED IQBAL**  
SRINAGAR, MARCH 24

TEN DAYS after his father Farooq Abdullah's detention was revoked by the Jammu and Kashmir administration, former J&K Chief Minister and National Conference leader Omar Abdullah was released from the Srinagar subsidiary jail at Hari Niwas where he was held for over seven months.

Abdullah drove the distance from Hari Niwas on Gupkar Road to his residence on the same



Seeks the release of others held in and outside J&K. Express

road. He was detained ahead of the August 5 announcement ending J&K's special status under Article 370 and its division into two new Union Territories.

In February, Abdullah was charged under the Public Safety Act along with former Chief Minister and PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti who remains under detention.

Sporting a beard, Abdullah stepped outside at 1.25 pm to make a statement. "In my period of detention I had thought a lot about what I would say the

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

**PAGE 1 ANCHOR** **First time since WWII, Olympics put off, Japan says next summer**

**MOTOKORICH, MATT FUTTERMAN & TARIQ PANJA**  
TOKYO, MARCH 24

THE TOKYO Olympics were postponed on Tuesday to 2021, the first such delay in the Games's 124-year modern history, as the coronavirus crisis wrecked the world's last sporting showpiece still standing this year.

After months of internal discussions, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) will postpone the Summer Games scheduled July 24-August 9 in Tokyo, Prime Minister Shinzo

Abe of Japan said. Instead, the Games, the world's largest sporting event, will take place in the summer of 2021, a change that will wreak havoc with sports schedules but should bring great relief to athletes, organisers and health officials who had increasingly pressed that the coronavirus pandemic made it unsafe to go forward with the event.

The Olympic flame, already lit at Olympia in Greece and taken to Japan for a now-cancelled torch relay, would stay in the host nation as a symbol of hope. "Sport is not the most important thing right now, preserv-

ing human life is," IOC president Thomas Bach said. "This Olympic flame will be the light at the end of this tunnel."

The decision became inevitable after the national Olympic committee in Canada announced on Sunday that it was withdrawing from the Games, and Australia's committee told its athletes that it was not possible to train for this summer under the widespread restrictions in place to control the virus. The US Olympic and Paralympic Committee, after initially declining to take a stand, joined the fray Monday night, urging the IOC to postpone.



In Tokyo, a countdown display to the 2020 Olympics. AP

Abe said he had asked Bach for a one-year delay and he had "agreed 100%". The IOC said a delay was the only way to ensure that the athletes train safely and the more than \$10 billion Japan has spent to prepare for the Olympics would not go to waste. Tokyo had beat out Madrid and Istanbul in 2013 to win hosting rights. Bach had said last week that cancelling the Games would not be an option.

But postponement has its own complications. The international governing bodies for track and field and swimming are set to hold world championships around that time and will have

to work with their athletes and host cities to push those events back, as will other international federations with major events on the calendar.

Moving the Games to the summer of 2022, another option, carried its own logistical challenges. In 2022, the IOC is set to hold the Winter Games in Beijing. Also, soccer's World Cup, which rivals the Olympics for the globe's biggest audience, is scheduled for the end of 2022. Three events in a calendar year would have put significant financial pressure on Olympic sponsors, which are already reeling under the collapse of the world

economy.

At a conference call in March between the World Health Organization and medical officers for the international sports federations that oversee Olympic events, participants had discussed worst-case scenarios, including the possibility of holding the Games without spectators.

The Summer Olympics are the world's largest sporting event, attracting more than 10,000 athletes from more than 200 countries. But, given the costs, in recent years, a growing number of cities and countries have balked at bidding to host

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



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**WEB EXCLUSIVE**

**VIDEO OF THE DAY**

**A ROBOT TO TAKE CARE OF VIRUS PATIENTS**  
The robot, in Kerala, can cut down on human contact

**EXPLAINED**

**MAKING SENSE OF THE FM'S RELIEF MEASURES**  
Sitharaman did not announce any fiscal sops

### CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK: WHERE THE TOP TEN AFFECTED COUNTRIES STAND NOW

There are just a handful of countries left with no recorded cases of COVID-19, but even those could be because of unreported infections. We do a status check of the countries with the highest rates of COVID-19 infections and how those governments have been handling the outbreak.

**EXPRESS AUDIO**

**How the coronavirus lockdown will affect the informal sector**

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

On the 3 Things podcast, we take a look at how the informal sector will bear the brunt of the lockdown and measures that the government can take to help.

## FROM PAGE ONE

### FM

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, the Finance Ministry raised the threshold default by 100 times for companies being taken to Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) to Rs 1 crore from Rs 1 lakh now. This will prevent triggering of default in stress situation caused by COVID-19. Slump in cash flows resulting from lockdown is expected to put a number of companies in a precarious financial position, forcing lenders to take them to National Company Law Tribunal for resolution.

"If the current situation continues beyond 30th of April 2020, we may consider suspending sections 7, 9 and 10 of the IBC 2016 for six months so as to stop companies at large from being forced into insolvency proceedings in such force majeure causes of default," Sitharaman said.

Sections 7, 9 and 10 of the IBC deal with initiation of insolvency for a company by a lender, and operational creditor or the company itself, respectively. Experts said that move was necessary as there would be many companies defaulting due to the impact of the coronavirus. However, this is expected to be negative for lenders and banks as they may face difficulty in recovery of loans.

"There is an expectation of a high level of default. Most people were taking companies to NCLT at the drop of a hat," said Abizer Diwanji, financial services leader at EY. Allowing a "deluge" of cases to come into the insolvency process would defeat the IBC which was to resolve distressed companies, he said.

The government extended deadlines for income tax and GST. The deadline for filing monthly GST summary returns due in March, April and May was extended till June 30 with no interest, penalty and late fee for those with turnover below Rs 5 crore,

and a reduced 9 per cent interest on taxpayers above Rs 5 crore turnover threshold from current 18 per cent. The deadline for filing I-returns for financial year 2018-19 and that Aadhaar-PAN linking has also been extended to June 30 from March 31.

The government has also extended the 'Vivad Se Vishwas' scheme till June 30 from March 31. Earlier, availing the scheme beyond the first March 31 deadline would have resulted in additional 10 per cent tax (with second deadline of June 30).

On the consumer banking side, the government provided relaxation to withdraw money from any bank's ATM without paying extra charges for next three months, while fee for maintaining minimum balance in bank accounts have also been waived for this period.

To queries on relaxation in non-performing asset classification norms and some leeway for people paying EMIs, Sitharaman said those decisions will be taken in due course. "A multi layered (task force) — including MPs, experts, industry participants — is working and analysing all suggestions and developments. An economic package is being worked out. Sooner, we will come out with that," she said.

With regard to compliance that companies have to make under MCA-21 registry, the government has issued a moratorium from April 1 till September without payment of any late filing fee. The mandatory requirement for holding meetings of Board of Directors has been relaxed by 60 days. Applicability of Companies (Auditor's Report) Order, 2020 will now be made applicable from the financial year 2020-2021 instead of 2019-2020.

Sitharaman said these relaxations are being provided so that people do not have to worry about compliance. The government has also relaxed requirements for companies to maintain deposit and debenture redemption reserves. For new companies, which are required to file a declaration for commencement of business within six months of incorporation, an extra six months would be given.

Further, as per Schedule 4 to the Companies Act, 2013, Independent Directors are required to hold at least one meeting without the attendance of Non-independent directors and members of management. For 2019-20, this won't be considered a violation.

**Omar freed**  
moment I came out. What I would say about what happened on the 5th of August, what I would say about the way J&K as a state was broken up into two Union Territories and what I would say about the change in the status of Jammu and Kashmir."

Saying he will speak at length about the politics and the situation in J&K post August 5, Omar demanded the release of those from J&K imprisoned in jails outside the UT.

"There are two things to be considered first. One, we have to fight coronavirus. Second, all of our people who are incarcerated in jails, either within or outside J&K. In these difficult times, the Centre should release them and bring them home. It is my earnest appeal to the Centre to lift restrictions on communication, if nothing else, please restore 3G/4G."

Cautioning against the spread of COVID-19, Abdullah said, "Those still in detention, whether it is Mehbooba Mufti... or many others who do not belong to any organisation... in these difficult times, they should be allowed to return to their families." Posting his release order and

## Don't step beyond your home's Lakshman Rekha, says PM

"This decision... has drawn a Lakshman Rekha at your doorsteps. You must remember that a single step outside your home can bring a dangerous pandemic like corona inside," he said.

Describing the lockdown "a few levels more than the Janata Curfew, and also stricter", the Prime Minister said it is "a necessary step in the fight" against the pandemic. Although "the nation will have to certainly pay an economic cost because of this lockdown", he said "to save the life of each and every Indian is mine, Government of India's, each state government's, each local unit's top most priority".

Acknowledging that "this crisis has certainly brought on a very difficult time for the poor", he said the central and state governments "are constantly striving to ensure that citizen do not face much inconvenience. We have made provisions to ensure that supplies of essential items continue smoothly," he said.

The Centre, he said, had put in place a provision of Rs 15,000 crore for treating coronavirus patients and strengthening the medical infrastructure. "This will allow for quickly boosting the number of corona testing facilities, personal protective equipment (PPE), isolation beds, ICU beds, ventilators and other essential equipment. Simultaneously, training of medical and paramedical manpower will also

be undertaken." Emphasising the importance of social distancing, he warned people that if this is not followed "it will be impossible to estimate the price India will have to pay".

"All of you are also witnessing how the most advanced countries have been rendered absolutely helpless by this pandemic. It is not that these countries are not putting in adequate efforts or they lack resources... If we want to restrict the spread of coronavirus, we will have to break its chain of infection. Some people are under the delusion that social distancing is essential only for sick people... Social distancing is necessary for each citizen, for each family, and for each member of the family. Carelessness of a few, ill-conceived notions of a few can put you, your children, your parents, your family, your friends, the country in jeopardy," he said.

"It took 67 days for the count of people infected with corona to reach the first one lakh all over the world. After this, it took only 11 days for another one lakh people... This is even more alarming that it took only four days for this disease to reach three lakh people from the count of two lakh."

Modi said "this is the reason that the situation became uncontrollable when coronavirus started spreading in countries such as China, US, France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Iran. Also remember, whether it is Italy or US, the healthcare services in these countries are considered to be among the best in the world. Despite this, these countries have not been able to contain the impact of corona." "The ray of hope to combat corona comes from the experiences of those countries that have been able to contain corona to some extent. Citizens of these countries have not stepped out of their homes for weeks. Citizen of these countries have fully adhered to the government rules." Urging people to "beware of any kind of rumours or superstitions", he praised those leading the fight against the threat. "While you are staying at home, you must think about and pray for the wellbeing of people who are fulfilling their duties, exposing themselves to great risk."

"Think about the doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, pathologists who are working day and night in hospitals to save each and every life. Think about hospital administration staff, ambulance drivers, ward boys, sanitation workers who are working to serve others in these difficult conditions. Pray for those people who are working to sanitise your society, your locality, your streets..." "Think about the media persons as well who are working round the clock and risking infection while reporting from the streets and hospitals. Think

## PM assures essentials are open

speech — which specify that all commercial and private establishments will be shut, but with exceptions: "shops, including ration shops dealing with food, groceries, fruits and vegetables, dairy and milk booths, meat and fish, animal fodder." With a rider that district authorities may encourage and facilitate home delivery to minimise the movement of individuals outside their homes."

The exceptions also include delivery of essential items through e-commerce; banks, insurance offices, ATMs, print and electronic media, telecommunication, internet services, broadcasting and cable services. During the lockdown, petrol pumps, cold storage units, power generation and transmission services and private security services will also be allowed to function.

a photograph showing him in his car, Abdullah said on Twitter, "232 days after my detention today I finally left Hari Niwas. It's a very different world today to the one that existed on 5th August 2019." He also changed his Twitter bio, to add "Former PSA Political detainee" to his profile.

Escorted by heavy security, he then walked to his father's residence for lunch. On Twitter, he thanked his sister, his lawyers and their legal teams.

The PSA dossier that formed the basis for Abdullah's detention noted his "to influence people for any cause can be gauged from the fact that he was able to convince his electorate to come out and vote in huge numbers even during the peak of militancy and poll boycotts". Before February, he was being held under the CrP. In March, Abdullah celebrated his 50th birthday, while in detention. Welcoming Omar's release, politicians called for release of other leaders. "Given the nation-

wide clampdown over COVID19, this is an imperative," CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury said on Twitter. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra tweeted: "Its about time the union government restores democratic and constitutional rights to the people of Jammu and Kashmir as well."

**Trucks stuck**  
Grofers and Big Basket too were left scrambling to ensure sustenance of their supply chains. Grofers CEO Albinder Dhindsa tweeted that their warehouse in Faridabad had been shut by officials, while Big Basket announced on its mobile app that they were not operational due to restrictions. A senior Big Basket official told *The Indian Express* police had stopped their logistics partners across the country. Amazon India said in a blog post that it was prioritising delivery of products to those needed most during the pandemic.

Online pharmacy 1mg's co-founder Prashant Tandon reported "about 17-18 incidents" of its delivery personnel being beaten up in Hyderabad, Delhi, Mumbai, Lucknow, and Bengaluru. Freshtohome also said its personnel were being assaulted. Flipkart Supermart "delayed delivery slots due to an unforeseen increase in demand", while fruits and vegetable suppliers on Swiggy were found "unserviceable" on Tuesday.

The Railways has informed the Cabinet Secretary about its staff, working to keep around 5,000 freight trains in operations, being stopped from reporting to duty, with all divisions affected to varying degrees. "Law enforcement agencies are telling our workers, labourers and others engaged in freight activities that all trains are cancelled so there can be no exemption for any railway worker. Then there are places where they are saying that only move-

ment of essential commodities will be allowed, though all goods trains stand exempted as per the Union government's instructions," a top government official told *The Indian Express*. Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi admitted disruption in supply of essential items. "We get rice from West Bengal, pulses from Katni and Satna in Madhya Pradesh, and mustard oil from Rajasthan. Trucks are being stopped at interstate borders," he told *The Indian Express*.

Kultaran Singh Atwal, President, All India Motor Transport Congress, said most trucks were halted at borders of Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and some states in southern India. "The government has locked everything down. Trucks are not being allowed to ply on roads... If the transport chain breaks, it poses danger to the supply of essential commodities," he said,

adding that drivers too were panicking, abandoning trucks at state borders to head to their native villages and towns. "Once they go away, it is very difficult to get them back," he said.

The situation is further complicated because rail and air transport too is almost entirely shut down. While all-cargo flights are exempted from the government suspension of domestic flights effective Tuesday midnight, passenger aircraft account for 60% of cargo volumes handled by airlines. Without any passengers, the airlines don't make enough earnings to make up for the costs incurred to operate flights.

At ports, shipments from COVID-19-affected countries like China and Singapore are not being offloaded due to fear of the contagion. Several ports are facing shortage of trucks due to drivers not being available. The Grofers CEO told *The Indian Express* they had a backlog of over 2.6 lakh orders. In a mail to customers, Grofers Head of Customer Experience Suneet Gupta wrote, "Unfortunately, our delivery team has been held up at checkpoints and some of our warehouses have been locked by local authorities, as the situation due to Covid-19 remains very uncertain."

"The PM pointed out that the country cannot afford community spread and it is internationally accepted that social distancing is the only formula we can adopt to control it," said an MP who was present there.

Opposition leaders including Congress MPs Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Suresh Kodikunni, DMK leader T R Baalu and RSP MP N K Premachandran together raised the issue of financial aid.

"He (Modi) said we will have to consider financial assistance, but it will have to be dealt at the second stage. He said as of now, our entire focus should be on social distancing," the MP said.

customers that they could not deliver as the "latest on-ground situation is non-conducive for home delivery". Both Grofers and Freshtohome said they were trying to procure curfew passes to operate in Delhi. — WITHERS, PATNA

## Olympic Games

The Games. Paris is set to host the Summer Olympics in 2024, and Los Angeles in 2028. Though it is the first Olympics postponement, the Games were cancelled outright three times during the last century's two World Wars. Tokyo was supposed to host the Summer Games in 1940 but had to bow out after it went to war with China. The Games were then awarded to Helsinki, but were cancelled after the outbreak of the war in Europe. Helsinki ultimately hosted the 1952 Summer Games, and Tokyo held them in 1964.

Cold War boycotts also disrupted the Moscow and Los Angeles Olympics in 1980 and 1984. NYT, WITH REUTERS

## Shaheen Bagh

overhead bridge were also removed. A volunteer who has been at the site since day one said, "Police deployment started around 6 am and around 7 am, a loud siren played. There were five women at the site, seated at a distance of at least two metres, with sanitiser. It was a symbolic protest." The volunteer said all artwork around, including photos of Bhagat Singh, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and B R Ambedkar, were removed by police.

The DCP, however, said that on Tuesday morning, "there were at least 50 people inside and outside the protest site". He added that they had deployed around 1,500 personnel, and companies of CRPF. "The protest paraphernalia are now case property".

A protester said that "only the physical protest had been removed", and that women "will continue this on social media and return once the epidemic ends". Tuesday morning also police vacate the Hauz Rani protest site in south Delhi, even as protesters issued a note Monday saying they will "continue to protest against the CAA, NRC and NPR without gathering in public places". DCP (south) Atul Kumar Thakur said, "Only two-three protesters were there and they left when we asked them to. No one was detained or arrested."

The women-led protest at Shaheen Bagh started on December 15 and inspired more than 200 similar sit-in protests across India. At least 300 women sat day and night under the tent. During the Delhi polls, the BJP had sought to pitch the fight as between "desh bhaktis" and those who "stand with Shaheen Bagh", with Home Minister Amit Shah raising the issue. Earlier this month, the Supreme Court had appointed interlocutors to find a way to break the deadlock. On Tuesday, they said, "We submitted two reports to the court, detailing our efforts and the situation then prevailing... We believe the interlocution kept Shaheen Bagh protests peaceful even while violence erupted in other parts of Delhi." The statement further said that "We request everyone to see the issue not as a question of win or lose. The country has a grave pandemic threatening it and currently that must receive priority. We request the administration and the protestors to now not do anything that will exacerbate the underlying tensions." FULL REPORTS ON www.indianexpress.com

## Classifieds

### PUBLIC NOTICE

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to public at large that my client Smt. ANJANA KISHOR RAO A-51A, GULAB BAGH UTTAM NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110009 has been issued all her immovable properties with immediate effect because of harassment, torture, cruelty, atrocities committed by them against my client. Any person dealing with them shall be doing so at their own risk, cost and consequences. My client shall not be responsible in any manner for the same.

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ADVOCATE  
Office 3, 19, S.R.R.I,  
District Centre Janki Park,  
New Delhi-110058

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**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is to notify that my client Smt. SHEKHAR W/O Sh. M.G. RAJA R/O A-6/4, Sita Puri behind Dabri Police Station, along with her husband Sh. M.G. Raja, has been issued all her immovable properties with immediate effect because of harassment, torture, cruelty, atrocities committed by them against my client. Any person dealing with them shall be doing so at their own risk, cost and consequences. My client shall not be responsible in any manner for the same.

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A.K.VERMA  
ADVOCATE  
Office 3, 19, S.R.R.I,  
District Centre Janki Park,  
New Delhi-110058

### PUBLIC NOTICE

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Public at large is informed that my clients Smt. Puran Chand Jhamb son of Smt. Fateh Chand Jhamb & Smt. Parvath Jhamb wife of Smt. Puran Chand Jhamb both resident of 1251, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Mukherjee Nagar, New Delhi-110009, have disowned/debarred their son Smt. PARUL JHAMB his wife Smt. JHAMB and their son Purab Jhamb all properties of 35/10 Indira Vihar Colony, Delhi-110009, their movable and immovable properties due to their disrespectful, out of control behavior and they have severed their relations with them for all intents and purposes with immediate effect. Anybody dealing with them will do so at their own risk and responsibility.

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Advocates  
Enrollment No. D-25002616



# 3 THE OUTBREAK THE CITY

## DELHI GOVT PROVIDING FOOD AT SHELTERS

# Homeless crowd shelters, numbers double

ANANYA TIWARI  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

DAY-TIME occupancy at shelters for the homeless has increased by 2.5 times in the past three days. With the capital under lockdown since Monday, the number of people staying in the shelters has gone up, with officials saying even at night, 1,000-1,500 people are staying there now.

On Saturday, 2,805 people stayed at the shelter. This number rose to 6,846 on Monday, the day the lockdown came into force. The number of those staying the night increased from 7,200 to 8,700.

The Delhi government has been distributing food in several shelters over the past two days. It is also considering financial aid for those living in shelters.

Labourers, rickshaw pullers, street vendors, sanitation workers and daily-wage labourers, who have been rendered vulnerable and bereft of income and food amid the lockdown, said they are unsure of what to do next. Factories and construction sites are closed, and inter-state train and transport services are suspended at least until March 31.

For the time being, night

shelters run by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) are proving to be cold comfort at an uncertain time.

On Tuesday, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted: "I have come to know that some people are not getting food due to the curfew. If you are in contact with someone who is looking for food and support, then send them to the nearest shelter of Delhi government, food has been arranged there."

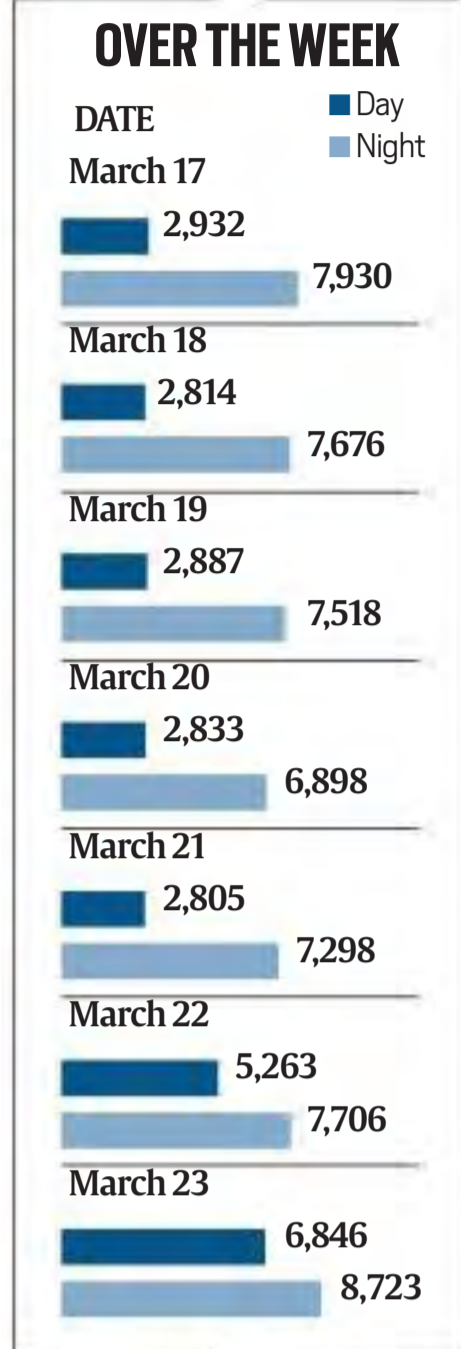
DUSIB member Bipin Rai told *The Indian Express*, "We have been providing lunch and dinner at 220 shelters since March 23. The people, even if they are not living in shelters, can choose from a simple menu of rice, pulses, vegetables, sometimes even *khichdi*."

"Around 8,000 people are staying and approximately 10,000 are having meals," he said. The food is prepared at various kitchens across the city and transported by vans to the shelters.

As part of safety measures, masks and gloves are used by workers to distribute food. At the shelters, people are checked for temperature and sent to hospitals if they show flu-like symptoms. "We make sure people wash their hands before eating,"



A Delhi government shelter near AIIMS. Day-time occupancies have increased by 2.5 times in the last three days. Tashi Tobgyal



said Rai.

Kantha (40), a street vendor from Mumbai, has been staying with her sons and their families

on the footpath and near public toilets at Sarai Kale Khan. The family used to earn Rs 400-Rs 700 per day and is now left with

no income. Kantha said, "We have no work, no money, and cannot even go home."

She said that though her

family is eating at the shelter, lack of money or any vegetable markets nearby has made life harder: "Even if we wanted to

buy anything, we have no place to get it from... we are drinking tap water. Even tea shops are closed."

At Nizamuddin, Manshuk Lal (35), a daily-wage labourer earning Rs 300 per day on an average, has been staying at a DUSIB shelter for years with his wife and six young children. Sitting on the ground owned by the shelter are many families like him, with young children.

"We have no work, our kids are hungry. We just eat what we get, but I wish we could buy vegetables, oil and cook our own food," he said.

At a shelter in Lodi Colony, Alam Mehmood (28), a rickshaw puller who would earn about Rs 200 a day, said, "I have been eating from the shelter... we get simple *dal* and rice." He collects the food in a plastic bag to eat later.

Dr Rathin Roy, director of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, emphasised the importance of supporting the incomes of daily-wage labourers. He said, "People who earn day-by-day have low cash margins, and the path to their destitution is swift. The government should not just provide cash transfers, but income support — to the *chaiwallah*, vendors and daily-wage labourers. They should also ensure that supply chain of food is not disrupted, and prices of food remain steady."

## CM announces Rs 5,000 for construction workers hit by lockdown, urges landlords to be generous

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

CHIEF MINISTER Arvind Kejriwal Tuesday announced the formation of a five-member committee of medical experts to chalk out a blueprint to manage potential community transmission of COVID-19 in the capital. The Delhi government also decided to extend financial assistance of Rs 5,000 each to construction labourers rendered jobless due to the lockdown in the capital.

Kejriwal said the committee has been asked to submit its report within a day. The CM also expressed satisfaction over the fact that no new positive case has been registered in Delhi over the



The CM announced the formation of a five-member panel of medical experts to tackle spread of COVID-19

last 24 hours. "The situation is under control. But can we manage if it spreads? So, we have constituted a team of five experts. They will share a plan within a day on how to tackle a stage three situa-

tion in Delhi," Kejriwal said at a live-streamed address.

The Rs 5,000 financial assistance to construction labourers is over and above the measures announced recently to help the socio-economically disadvantaged cushion the effects of the widespread restrictions better. These include doubling of pension for widows, the differently abled and senior citizens. Kejriwal said more night shelters, where free meals are being provided to the homeless and the poor, will be opened so that no one goes hungry.

Referring to the alarming spread of the virus in Italy, Kejriwal said while the situation in Delhi was largely under control, one cannot afford to be complacent as the numbers may

shoot up any time. "We have to remain vigilant. I can imagine the difficulties you must be going through. It is imperative to save lives, so we are having to take strong measures. I am especially happy people are helping each other out," the CM said.

However, he expressed strong displeasure over reports of RWAs and landlords turning away and evicting tenants who happen to be doctors, nurses, pilots and flight attendants over fears that they could have the virus. "They are putting their lives at stake for you and your children. If you fall ill, you will rush to these people only, right? Such discrimination is not right," said Kejriwal. The CM also lauded many individuals who paid heed to his call to ex-

empt tenants from paying rent temporarily. "I am proud of such citizens and I want to tell them that you are the real patriots of India. I want to mention Raj Bainslaji who has decided that he will not take rent for the month of March from any of his tenants. Anil Kaushik ji has informed that he will not take rent from his tenants and drivers for the months of March and April. Naveen Nambardar ji also decided not to take this month's rent from his tenants. Azad Shaukeen ji decided the same. Sukant Ballav ji, an additional DCP of Northeast Delhi, took an old man in his cart to the hospital for dialysis. I want to thank all these people for such encouraging steps in this tough time," said Kejriwal.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

DOCTORS, NURSES and other healthcare workers battling the coronavirus outbreak are being asked to vacate their rented homes, and some have been forcibly evicted by landlords, the Residents Doctors' Association of AIIMS has alleged in a letter to the Union Home Minister.

After the allegations came to light, Home Minister Amit Shah called up the RDA and assured them that such instances of ostracisation will be taken seriously and action will be taken immediately. Shah also spoke to the Delhi Police Commissioner and asked him to take strict action against such landlords.

CM Arvind Kejriwal also took to Twitter, asking doctors to send him contact details of their landlords so he can try and persuade them not to evict doctors. "These doctors save our lives, they put their lives at risk. Landlords should not do this. God forbid that someone from the landlord's family gets coronavirus; these doctors will be the ones who can help them out," he tweeted.

RDA president Dr Adarsh Pratap Singh and general secretary Dr Srinivas Rajkumar T, who sent the letter, told *The Indian Express* that they wanted PM Narendra Modi to speak on this issue during his 8 pm address Tuesday. "A lot of our doctors, nurses have approached us about stay and other things... they have been asked to stay at the hospital

for sometime... We have doctors who have come from far off places. We have made some arrangements for their stay inside the campus," said Dr Srinivas.

The RDA, in its letter, wrote: "Doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers involved in COVID care are being asked to vacate their rented homes and some have been forcefully evicted from their temporary residence by landlords due to fear that those healthcare professionals make them more susceptible to coronavirus infection... many doctors are now stranded on the roads..."

Following the complaints, the health department issued orders to district magistrates, MCD deputy commissioners and DCPs "to take strict penal action against such landlords/house owners".

## Rain, strong winds lash Delhi, lockdown helps improve air quality

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

GUSTY WINDS and light rain, brought on by a Western Disturbance, brought Delhi's temperatures down on Tuesday.

The capital saw the season's highest temperature so far at 33 degrees Celsius, two degrees above normal. Delhi has seen a longer and colder than usual winter and temperatures in March have mostly remained below normal. On Tuesday, the minimum temperature was 18.6 degrees Celsius, a degree above normal.

IMD officials said the sky is expected to remain cloudy on Wednesday and there is a

chance of light rain. The temperature is expected to be between 19 and 32 degrees Celsius.

"The sudden change in weather was because of a Western Disturbance over Himachal Pradesh. Its effects will be felt till Thursday, but heavy rain is not expected," said a senior IMD official.

The capital has recorded 101.9 mm rainfall this month, the highest ever in March.

With the city under lockdown and several people working from home over the past two weeks and vehicular movement down to a minimum, the city's air quality has improved. On Monday and Tuesday, the parameters were in the 'moderate' range.



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**Notice of Record Date**

Notice is hereby given that Pursuant to Regulation 42 of the SEBI (Listing Regulations and Disclosures Requirements) Regulations 2015, the Company has fixed **Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2020** as "Record Date" to ascertain the name of the shareholders entitled for Sub-division of equity shares of ₹ 10/- each into five(5) equity shares of face value of ₹ 2/- each.

For Ircon International Limited  
Sd/-  
(Ritu Arora)  
Company Secretary & Compliance Officer

Place : New Delhi  
Date : 24.03.2020





## CORONA WATCH

## Delhi Police responds to queries on lockdown

New Delhi: From transport of urgent medical supplies to visiting a friend 2 km away, several queries about lockdown restrictions poured in for the Delhi Police between 5 pm and 6 pm Tuesday, the second day of lockdown in the capital. Police invited questions from NCR residents on social media using the hashtag #lockdownquery.

## BCI seeks monthly allowance for lawyers

New Delhi: The Bar Council of India (BCI) has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and chief ministers of other states, requesting that a monthly subsistence allowance of Rs 20,000 be allocated for young or economically weaker advocates in view of circumstances arising due to the coronavirus outbreak.

## Ministry steps in for man's dialysis

New Delhi: A tweet from a worried daughter prompted officials from the state's health ministry to step in Tuesday to arrange transport facilities for Ashok Singh (67), who needed to travel for a kidney dialysis. Shaleen Mitra, OSD to Delhi Health Minister, Satyender Jain, said, "I contacted her immediately. We arranged an ambulance for him at 7 am to reach PSRI Hospital and one at 2 pm for him to return home." ENS



Residents of the relief camp at Eidgah in Old Mustafabad prepare to leave on Tuesday. Around 600 riot victims were at the camp. Prem Nath Pandey

## CORONAVIRUS FEARS

## Eidgah camp cleared out, riot victims ask: Where do we go?

ANAND MOHAN J & JIGNASA SINHA  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

SHABANA ANSARI has five daughters to look after and no home to return to. After riots broke out in Northeast Delhi last month, the Eidgah relief camp in Old Mustafabad has doubled up as a home to her and 600 other riot victims.

However, with the coronavirus outbreak, she and the other families are forced to look for a place to stay, 24 hours after authorities began clearing the camp.

Shabana, who has no spare clothes, ration, medicines or even a spare blanket, said, "My house is a smouldering ruin. Now I have to look for a home as they cleared out the relief camp. Where do I go with my five daughters?"

On Tuesday morning, organisers offered riot victims Rs 3,000 in cash to help pay rent and ration to last a few days and told them to look for a house. Many, however, dread going back to their homes, fearing attacks by neighbours.

Most families also claimed they have not received money for the rent. AAPMLA Haji Yunus told *The Indian Express*, "We are clearing out the camp due to coronavirus. But we are giving them ration and rented accommodation. I myself saw two families being given houses in Babu Nagar, they said they liked it."

Volunteers at the camp told *The Indian Express* that they have been planning on vacating it for a week since it was becoming difficult to manage healthcare and food. "Only 30-40 families

are left in the camp," said Wasim, a volunteer.

On Saturday, the Delhi High Court had directed the Delhi government to ensure that adequate healthcare facilities are provided at the camp within two days.

Advocate Afsha Pracha, who represents riot victims, said the "authorities should have provided healthcare services as per the High Court directions instead of clearing out people".

Like Shabana, others too are looking for a roof above their heads.

Isra (45) has been trying to get medicines for her son who has fever. She was given Rs 1,000 and five sets of clothes and told to vacate the camp. "They told me I could get infected with coronavirus and spread it around," she said.

Jameela Begum (55), a widow,

had fled her home after it was attacked with petrol bombs. She now has high fever and a sore throat. "Officials said I cannot go to my house for a month. It is completely destroyed," she said.

Haseena (50), a resident of Shiv Vihar, has been wearing the same clothes ever since she ran away from her house which was looted. "My native place is in Uttar Pradesh. Will they give us special trains to leave Delhi?" she asked. She said she has not received compensation money from the government.

Mumtaz (40) has left the camp for her relative's house, which has a single room and no bathroom. "But they will only let me stay for a week," she said. Her house was set ablaze — the mob also made away with the jewellery she had saved for her daughter — and her husband

sustained acid attack injuries.

"The government gave Rs 40,000 for the injuries sustained by my husband and daughter. But we still haven't received money for our home. We filled the form two weeks ago and officials also verified everything. We haven't heard from them yet. My husband can't work because he lost his vision," said Mumtaz. Imran Khan (32), who lived in Shiv Vihar, said volunteers told him and his family of eight to find a new place. "I worked at a printing shop, which is now burnt. Today, we left in the rain. We have now found a room but the landlord will ask for money later. The government has not paid for the damage to our house."

Officials said 15 households are yet to receive compensation while the rest have been given the relief amount.

## All other transport shut, burden of city commute falls on DTC

SUKRITA BARUAH  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

AS THE only form of public transport permitted to ply on city's roads, the DTC is trying to streamline the crowd on buses after struggling with heavy footfall on day one of the lockdown.

According to the directives issued by the Delhi government, Metro services have been suspended, as have all private cabs, including Uber and Ola, as well as autos and e-rickshaws.

While DTC buses are the only mode of public transport operating, on Monday, only 25% of the fleet — which is less than 1,000 buses — were on the street.

"On normal days, after eight hours of service, a bus on any given route collects around Rs 1,500 through tickets. But on Monday, there was so much overcrowding that almost every bus collected over Rs 4,500 through tickets," said a DTC employee.

On Tuesday, the number of buses was increased to 50% of the fleet, around 2,000 buses. This, along with stricter enforcement of the lockdown, led to a substantial relief.

On Tuesday, the DTC also issued an order that all buses should have stickers on their windscreens stating they are for

"staff of essential services only and on government duty".

Conductors have been tasked with checking the official identity cards of all passengers before allowing them to enter.

Each bus has a driver, a conductor and a marshal. "We have not been provided with gloves, masks or hand sanitiser. Whoever has any of these bought it themselves. There is a lot of contact in buses — just to move around, and in the buying and selling of tickets. As we are working while everything else is closed down, there should be some measures for our safety," said Manoj Sharma, president of the DTC workers' union.

"With police also enforcing the lockdown more strictly, we are seeing some relief to the system. We also issued instructions to all depot managers on Tuesday to purchase masks and sanitisers, and distribute these to personnel on buses," said DTC spokesperson RS Minhas.

Other public transport providers, meanwhile, find themselves in a tough position.

On Tuesday afternoon, Gopal sat in his cycle rickshaw, waiting for customers on a deserted main road in South Delhi. "Police have asked me to leave many times, but I need to look after my wife and two children," he said.



Police personnel stop commuters at the Delhi-UP Border in Ghazipur on Tuesday. Praveen Khanna

## Delhi Police laid out detailed plan to clear anti-CAA protests

MAHENDER SINGH  
MANRAL  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

ON MONDAY evening, a message was sent to all policemen in the Southeast, Northeast, South and Central Delhi districts to assemble with riot-gear at 7 am on Tuesday and clear the anti-CAA protest sites in the capital. The message said the protesters were violating Section 144 CrP, which was imposed in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak in the capital.

According to a senior police officer, despite prohibitory orders, several violations were seen on the ground on Monday. "After several meetings, Delhi Police Commissioner S N Shrivastava first tightened curbs and then made a plan to clear protest sites. All JCPs of ranges concerned were asked to prepare a plan to clear the roads," said the officer.

The anti-CAA protest at Shaheen Bagh has been on since December 15, with at least 300 women at the forefront of it. It sparked many similar demonstrations across the city.

"On Monday evening, police-

men were sent to protest sites at Shaheen Bagh and Nizamuddin, Hauz Rani in South Delhi, Turkman Gate in Central Delhi, Seelampur in Northeast Delhi to request protesters to clear the road as Section 144 CrP has been imposed. But they refused," said the officer.

Later, meetings were called by JCP (Southern) Devesh Srivastava in the southeast and south districts, JCP (Eastern) Alok Kumar in Northeast and Special CP (Central) Rajesh Khurana in the Central district.

"Some officers suggested that the sites can be cleared late at night, but it was later decided to carry out the same in the morning. This was conveyed to the police chief, who suggested that they reach all protest sites at the same time — 6.45 am. If anyone created a ruckus, officers were told to arrest them," said police sources.

A message was sent to the districts concerned, asking police stations to send their personnel, including women staff, with anti-riot gears and arms. "Paramilitary forces were also asked to be at the protest sites," police sources added.

## 2 more cases in Gurgaon

SAKSHI DAYAL  
GURGAON, MARCH 24

A DAY after a lockdown was notified in Gurgaon, the Commissioner of Police Tuesday asked people to cooperate in its enforcement, warning that curfew orders will have to be enforced in the district otherwise.

This came as two more people tested positive for coronavirus Tuesday — both relatives of a 22-year-old woman who returned from London and tested positive last week. Her brother had tested positive earlier.

"The 45-year-old father and 70-year-old grandmother of the student, both of whom live at the family's home in Palam Vihar, tested positive today. They are asymptomatic and have been admitted to the isolation ward in Civil Hospital," said Dr Jaswant Singh Punia, CMO, Gurgaon. Gurgaon now has 10 cases.

Officials said 232 samples have been sent for testing so far, of which 172 tested negative, 10 tested positive, and results of the rest are awaited. Fifty samples were collected for testing Tuesday.

Meanwhile, police chief Mohammad Akil said: "As far as traffic movement is concerned, from what I have seen, there is a little movement in the city, but on the highway it is less than 1%. Within the city, it is 2-3%. I further request residents to reduce movement even more."

"The more you reduce movement, the more your safety will be increased. If we feel cooperation is not complete, we will become helpless and will have to issue curfew orders under Section 144. Authorities do not want that such a step should have to be taken, like it has been in Delhi or Punjab. We want our people to suffer as little as possible," he said.

As per the Commissioner, the first two days of lockdown saw

"some difficulty" in enforcement, with 33 FIRs being registered against people found violating orders, including drivers of autos and cabs who were out on the roads despite their movement being prohibited.

The district magistrate also issued an order to nine hotels in the district, directing that their premises had been identified for setting up "paid quarantine facilities". These are Fern Residency, and Park Plaza, with 20 rooms each for quarantine each, Lemon Tree in Sector 29 and Hotel Clarence with 25 rooms each, 45 rooms at Radisson hotel in Bhondsi, 12 rooms at Airport Motel in Shikohpur, 50 rooms at Crowne Plaza, 95 rooms at Park Inn in Bilaspur, and 100 rooms at Red Fox hotel in Sector 60. Officials said charges for quarantine at hotels would be Rs 3,600 for single bed occupancy, and would include three meals.

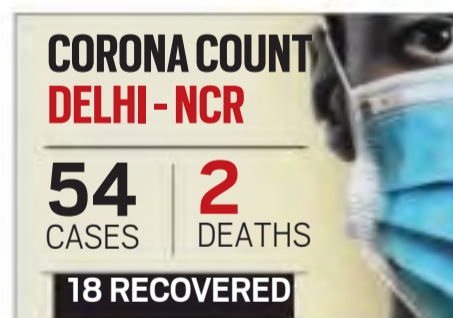
## Noida couple with no travel history among three cases

AMIL BHATNAGAR  
NOIDA, MARCH 24

THREE NOIDA residents tested positive for coronavirus Tuesday, taking the district's tally to 11.

"A couple who had not travelled to any COVID-19 affected country are among the two cases. Prima-facie, it appears they contracted it from a client who traveled to UK. Another resident who traveled to South Africa also tested positive. We have sealed the residential colonies where the three patients live and are screening and sensitising residents," said Dr Anurag Bhargava, CMO, Gautam Budh Nagar. As per state department figures till Tuesday, Noida has the maximum number of cases in UP.

According to officials, 60 more persons who allegedly



came in contact with the positive patients have been put under surveillance and 65 samples were sent for testing.

The residential society in Sector 137 where the couple live was sealed and residents were asked to remain in their homes until further notice. Noida Authority officials carried out sanitisation of the colony. Medical health officials have begun door-to-door screening at the couple's housing society and Zeta 1 in Greater Noida where the other patient stayed.

## Minutes after PM's address, Delhi-NCR grocery stores see massive rush

AMITAVA CHAKRABORTY  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

MINUTES AFTER Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared a country-wide lockdown owing to the COVID-19 outbreak, people thronged grocery stores and vegetable shops in Delhi-NCR in fear that they will not be allowed to step out of their homes for the next 21 days.

Jitesh Jain (48), a resident of Vasundhara Enclave, said that he had not stocked up the previous three days thinking stores will remain open. "After the PM's speech, there was panic in my house. We get milk from an online delivery service but our on-

der was cancelled. I realised we were almost out of milk and there were no vegetables either. I decided to get as many things as I could so that even if there are issues later, we can get by," he said.

The Prime Minister later said on Twitter that essential services, which include grocery stores and vegetable shops, will be operational.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also tweeted to reassure people of the same: "The 21-day lockdown announced by the Prime Minister is a very important step. I assure the people of Delhi that for the next three weeks, there will be no shortage in the supply of essential items. At this difficult time, your needs



will be taken care of."

A grocery store owner in Jangpura Extension said that people had started lining up outside his store around 8.45 pm.

"We were letting in only two people at a time to limit exposure but that meant a long line started to grow outside our doors. People are mostly stocking up on basics such as rice, flour, oil, sugar, powdered milk. Many are also bulk buying instant noodles and pre-cooked food," said Chetan Vaashisht, who runs the Siddhivinayak store in the area.

Across Noida, most grocery

stores remained closed through the day. The few that remained open shut shop by 10.30 pm. "Supply has mostly been erratic. Although people have been trying to buy in bulk, we have tried our best to ration food commodities evenly among customers," said Reenu (62), owner of a store in Sector 27, as police maintained a tight vigil on people gathered at the shop.

One of the buyers at the shop, Manek (42), was worried about her two children at home. While putting 15 packets of Maggi in a bag, she said, "Bread and milk powder aren't available anywhere. I finally bought a packet of bread at another shop, which cost Rs 60 (the original price is Rs 38)."



# 5 THE OUTBREAK NATION



People try to catch a bus to return home at Jalukbari, in Guwahati on Tuesday. *Dasarath Deka*

## DSP booked for hiding son's travel history

Hyderabad: A Deputy Superintendent of Police in Telangana's Bhadradi Kothagudem district has been booked for hiding his son's foreign travel history. The officer's 21-year-old son was tested positive for COVID-19 on March 23 evening. Following a complaint by Revenue Inspector Yasin Pasha Shaik, police booked the officer for hiding his son's travel to the city from London via Dubai on March 18. "The passenger hid his travel history at the airport in Hyderabad. And in spite of being a police officer, his father did not report. The student not only went to a barber shop but also attended functions at Palwancha and a few other places. We have so far traced 30 people who came in close contact with him. Due to negligence and carelessness of the family, the entire district administration is on its toes now trying to trace people who may have come in contact with him," Shaik said. Both the father and son have been booked under Section 188 of IPC (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant). **ENS**

## Pune to quarantine migrants

Pune: The Pune zilla parishad has directed at least a fortnight-long home quarantine for people who have come back to their villages from Mumbai and Pune. Announcing this, the CEO of the zilla parishad, Ayush Prasad, said they have taken steps such as empowering gram panchayats to appoint private doctors, paramedical and nursing staff. Teams from the zilla parishad have surveyed 6.15 lakh households since a 41-year-old anganwadi worker tested positive for COVID-19, followed by the discovery of infection in five close relatives. She is hospitalised and critical. The total number of positive cases in Maharashtra has now crossed 100. **ENS**



Traffic policeman stops a tourist in Chandigarh on Tuesday. *Express*

## Arrests, photos with pamphlets: Police enforce state lockdowns

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

IN CHHATTISGARH and Jharkhand, violators were made to pose for photos holding pamphlets on the lockdown. In Gujarat, four members of a family were booked for not revealing details of a recent trip to Dubai. In Punjab, police helped people with grocery purchases but wielded batons to chase away motorists.

Many states enforced local shutdowns through Tuesday by registering scores of FIRs and detaining hundreds before Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a 21-day nationwide lockdown.

**GUJARAT: 426 DETAINED, 238 CASES LODGED**

"We had a success rate of 80-90 per cent on the first day. We have also decided to set up a 24/7 control room to enforce the lockdown," DGP Shivanand Jha said.

Among those booked were four members of a family in Gandhinagar for not following home quarantine directives after a recent trip to Dubai — all four have tested positive for COVID-19.

## Punjab: More curbs, tracking teams formed as quarantine-dodging NRIs spark alarm

**ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA & KANCHAN VASDEV**  
JALANDHAR, CHANDIGARH, MARCH 24

THOUSANDS OF NRIs have been pouring into Punjab in the last few weeks, with several of them dodging home quarantine, or even running away from authorities looking to track them down. This has forced the government to form around 200 teams in the state's Doaba region, which has a large NRI population, to track down such people and forcibly isolate them at home.

**HARYANA: 60 FIRS, 90 ARRESTED**

Besides the FIRs and arrests, hundreds of challans were issued to motorists and their vehicles impounded. "People were warned wherever minor non-compliance was found. They were allowed to purchase basic necessities, but only after following social distancing norms," Navdeep Singh Virk, ADGP (Law and Order), said.

**CHHATTISGARH: HOTEL OWNER, EX-CORPORATOR BOOKED**

In Ambikapur, a hotel owner and an ex-corporator were booked for organising a party for 2,000 people on Sunday, the day of the Janata Curfew. "Police have traced all those who attended the party and asked them to follow self-quarantine," Sarguja SP Ashutosh Singh said.

In Rajnandgaon, police stopped people found loitering on roads and driving without masks, and made them pose for photos with pamphlets that declared the holder to be an "enemy of the public". "I have seen the pictures, but I am unaware as to who did it or why this was done. I am looking into the matter," SP B S Dhruv said.

**JHARKHAND: 12 FIRS**

People at a sweet shop in Doranda, a pan shop near Manjhi Chowk and near a cinema hall in the Hinoo area of Ranchi were found violating prohibitory orders, police said.

"In Jagannathpur, people at a gift corner and others in Hawai Nagar were booked for violating lockdown orders," Ranchi SSP Anish Gupta said. Two FIRs were also registered against those who stepped out for an evening walk, he said.

In Saraikela-Kharsawan, the administration clicked photos of travellers holding pamphlets that said they would "not step out" of their homes.

**PUNJAB: 228 FIRS, 111 ARRESTS**

Chief Minister Amarinder Singh posted video clips of policemen distributing food to people from economically weaker sections in Ajnala, and helping others buy vegetables from a vendor while offering hand sanitisers.

Several other videos circulated on social media, however, showed violators being lathicharged, made to do sit-ups, beaten and abused for violating the lockdown.

**KERALA: 402 CASES REGISTERED**

Apart from registering cases, a travel pass to be issued by district SPs was made mandatory for those engaged in essential services. Besides, police said, those who venture out in private vehicles will have to furnish an affidavit mentioning purpose of travel, destination and time of return.

**RAJASTHAN: 29 HELD**

Police arrested two persons for circulating misleading videos during the Janata Curfew Sunday. One of the videos, which showed the Ramganj Bazaar functioning normally, was found to have been taken the previous day. In the other, a contractual employee had posted a news channel broadcast with morphed headlines.

**UTTARAKHAND: 55 FIRS, 160 ARRESTED**

DG (Law and Order) Ashok Kumar said 6,000 police personnel and 20 companies of PAC have been deployed across the state for enforcement of the lockdown.

(WITH ENDS IN PARENTS)

## Panic buying across country, cops step in

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
MUMBAI, KOLKATA, LUCKNOW, AHMEDABAD, JAIPUR, GUWAHATI, MARCH 24

NOTWITHSTANDING Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal for calm and that there were adequate supplies of essential items, his call for a 21-day lockdown triggered panic buying across states.

In Mumbai, soon after his speech ended, residents rushed out in droves to grocers and vegetable vendors to stock up on foodgrains, snacks, milk, eggs, bread and cleaning material. Policemen used batons to enforce the ban on gatherings. "I had to return home empty-handed because some policemen were beating people ahead of us," said Pooja Gala, a working professional who went with her father to a grocery store near the Bhayander police station. In Juhu, a vegetable cart was chased by people, in turn with police in hot pursuit.

A policewoman in Lokhandwala Township, Kandivali, said crowds grew even before the PM's speech ended. "They just ran down as soon as the PM said lockdown," she said.

In Kolkata, New Alipore Market saw people coming in cars to lift sack-full of items. Shops selling chicken were forced open by panic-stricken customers. "We want to buy as many things as possible as I have too many mouths to feed at home," said a man in his 40s, shopping with his wife and driver. Soon, Kolkata Municipal Corporation officials arrived to close the shops, and when that did not work, switched off the power supply to the market.

Lucknow markets saw huge crowds huddle around shops selling medicines, groceries, milk and vegetables. Looking for milk for his



AFTER PM'S SPEECH: At a grocery store at Sion in Mumbai.

children at a grocery shop in Nishatganj market, Ashish Singh (31) said, "I don't know if there will be arrangements for milk and other essentials... I have been to four shops, but none have milk."

Long queues were seen at ATM machines too. The owner of a grocery store in Nishatganj said, "If the PM had to make an announcement like this, he should have either informed us in advance or should have given detailed instruction on how essential commodities will be made available..."

Additional Chief Secretary Awanish Awasthi said arrangements would be made for the supply of essential commodities to everyone at home. "A large number of vehicles will be employed."

Ahmedabad too saw crowds at vegetable and grocery stores as well as Amul dairy parlours and petrol pumps. An owner of a small provision store on the Vasna Bhayali Road in Vadodara said they feared for their safety. "The rush is unbelievable. If we do not get supplies by tomorrow, we might have to shut down," he said.

CM Vijay Rupani went on social media to assure that no sup-

plies would run out. Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot welcomed the initiative by the PM while asking collectors to ensure that the poor were taken care of. But, he too had to appeal for calm over panic buying. "No prohibition on opening of shops selling essential commodities and no time limit has been fixed for these," he said. "Consumer stores should use mobile van for home delivery of necessary items."

Assam saw panic buying of essential items throughout Tuesday. Assam Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said "difficult times" called for "difficult measures". In other states of the Northeast, officials said people had already prepared for the immediate next few days.

In a series of tweets, Modi said, "My fellow citizens, there is absolutely no need to panic... Essential commodities, medicines etc would be available. The Centre and various state governments will work in close coordination to ensure this."

Home Minister Amit Shah also assured that there will be no crisis of essential commodities.

## In a first, private lab collects sample: No point being scared

**PRABHA RAGHAVAN**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

AROUND 10 am, Dr Lal PathLabs senior phlebotomist Kamlesh Thakur received a call from his team to perform the first-ever sample collection for coronavirus test for private laboratories. By 11 am, he was standing outside a "small nursing home" in central Delhi.

Sanitising himself, the 30-year-old arrived at an area designated for him to wear his protective gear. First the shoe covers with his trousers tucked in, then a hazmat suit, followed by a head cover, face mask, goggles and, finally, the gloves.

After asking a few questions to verify the identity of the patient, he performed a nasal and throat swab, putting it in a viral transport medium, stored in a box. He exited the area, took his protective gear off and sealed it in another kit to be destroyed, sanitised himself once more and took off for a transit point, from where the sample would be taken to the company's lab in Rohini for testing.

"Before entering the patient's room, we have to ensure that not a single part of our body is exposed," says Thakur, who learnt of the many risks associated with



**Kamlesh Thakur is a senior phlebotomist at Dr Lal PathLabs**

sample collection during some of India's swine flu outbreaks.

Thakur, who has a three-year-old son, volunteered for the job. "This is about protecting the country. I work in the healthcare sector, so there is no point getting scared (in situations like these)," he says, adding, "But just to make sure, I sanitise myself and remove my clothes before entering my house."

As many as 300 others like him, working in diagnostic chains across the country, have been trained for such situations and are gearing up to take on the task of collecting samples either from homes or hospitals.

Around 22 private laboratories, including Dr Lal PathLabs, Dr Danges Lab and Indraprastha Apollo have been approved to help government test patients for the virus. Of these, Dr Lal PathLabs has offered two of its laboratories that fit the government's criteria

— the one in Rohini, which was approved on Monday (March 23), and another in Kolkata, which is still awaiting approval. Each of these labs can perform around 1,500 tests.

"We have started our operations today... We have informed our call centre... and our sales teams have informed doctors that we are now conducting (COVID-19) tests," Dr Lal PathLabs managing director Dr Arvind Lal said.

The firm has been receiving queries by email, phone calls and their website. "Hospitals also contact us. Even today, a couple of hospitals called us up," he says.

The company has qualified personnel ready to be deployed for sample collection across the country. It has set the turnaround time for the final reports at up to 48 hours, given the difficulties in collecting and transporting samples in some states. "This (sample collection) is predominantly in Delhi at this stage. In other cities, we have not been able to pick up (samples) because of air freight movement restrictions. Ground transportation has also come to a complete halt," says Dr Lal.

The company has decided to perform the two tests at once — both initial and confirmatory tests in one go — at the cost of Rs 4,500.

## '10,000-15,000 samples per day... will make test kits affordable'

PUNE-BASED molecular diagnostic startup Mylab has received approval from the regulatory body to sell its kits to labs testing samples for COVID-19. The firm's managing director, **HASMUKH RAWAL**, spoke to **KAUNAIN SHERIFF** about the cost and scale of production of the kits, and how the company received the approval.

**What is the estimated number of kits that you will be able to deliver in the Indian market?**

I want to state that government support has been absolutely commendable, which has fast-tracked the process so that we can start serving the country... We are starting the production batch. In the next two days, we will be ready for 10,000-15,000 test samples per day... We have received orders from private diagnostic labs, and we will fully support

them.

**What will be the cost of a kit? Will the kit be cheaper than those being imported into India?**

The kits have to be available to the masses. So, if the government currently purchases (kits) for Rs 4,500, our product will be one-fourth the price... We will make the kits affordable.

**The ICMR conducted a validation test for nine companies. However, only the German-based Altona Diagnostics and your company could achieve 100 per cent results. Why is that only one Indian company could get validation?**

We work only in the field of molecular diagnostics platform, and our focus has been HIV, HCV, chikungunya, dengue, etc.



Specifically in the case of a pandemic like COVID-19, it is very important to bring a high-end test to the masses because you cannot wait for the person to (test) positive... Also, you don't want to risk a patient with a false positive or false negative, and the delay can lead to high mortality rates. Therefore, efficient tests for



The Mylab team that has received approval to sell kits

such viral infections can be achieved only through molecular diagnostics. Since, we have all the required things in place — the research and development, production, quality control, sourcing — that is why we got validation in record time.

**When did you begin developing kits for COVID-19?**

We began working on the kit two months back. All the SOPs were in place and there was a lot of work involved. As a policy, we don't launch any product till the time our quality control team ap-

proved it. There are very stringent criteria. We released the batch (of kits) to National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune for evaluation only when we were very sure that it will pass all the tests. And you can see that even though a multinational like Altona started a little early, we received the validation at the same time. This proves that Indian companies are on par with other global companies.

**What was the process of evaluation at NIV?**

Keeping in mind the spread of the pandemic, the guidelines are very stringent. You cannot even risk any cross-reactivity — one has to be very careful about false positivity or false negativity while conducting the test... The kit has to give the result with 100 per cent accuracy. As far as I know, during the evaluation, the authorities also

checked the sensitivity — that is, the lowest quantity of virus the kit can pick. Kits with such sensitivity can also track the virus in asymptomatic patients.

Since there are other viruses of the same family, and which look alike, the evaluation also looked into activity with other similar viruses. This is to ensure that the kit does choose other similar viruses as the one causing COVID-19. And we received 100 per cent test results on all these parameters.

**Before seeking validation for commercial kits, did you give your kits for research use only to NIV?**

We wanted to but we didn't. ICMR said that non-US Food and Drug Administration or non-European CE (firms) need to send their kits only to NIV, Pune for validation. However, we also sent our

kits to Kasturba Gandhi Hospital (in Mumbai) for evaluation. These kits are called "testing purpose kits". So in that sense, we did send our test kits to Kasturba Gandhi Hospital. So technically, the kits received validation from NIV as well as from Kasturba.

**What were the other approvals you received before you got validation from the NIV?**

First, we needed a testing licence in place. You cannot manufacture the batch (of kits) unless you have a license from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization. After that, we developed the product and sent it for validation. The companies also need to have production capacity. The production is done on the basis of FDA guidelines. The CDSCO inspects the production site, and only then we can begin the production.



# 6 THE OUTBREAK NATION

Airline staffer, family harassed, aviation minister says help those at forefront

ENS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, KOLKATA,  
MARCH 24

AS MULTIPLE cases emerge of airline staff being ostracised and harassed as airlines take part in rescue operations in coronavirus-affected countries and people flying in reporting positive for the virus, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Tuesday stated that he has urged the authorities concerned to "extend all possible help, support and protection to them and their families, including to those who are in self-quarantine".

Puri tweeted, "Deeply distressed to know that some aviation professionals who have been at the forefront of India's efforts to prevent & contain the spread of Coronavirus & even rescue fellow citizens from COVID19 around the world are being harassed by their neighbours, RWAs & others.... I respect the selfless commitment & determination of our professionals & have requested concerned authorities..."

On Tuesday, Kolkata Police ordered a probe and said strict action will be taken against those found guilty after a crew member of an airline took to social media alleging harassment to her and her mother by neighbours and shopkeepers in the city's Thakurpukur area.

In the video, which went viral shortly after it was posted, the woman said people in her locality have labelled her as a coronavirus-infected person.

The woman also said neighbours turn up at her home when she is not there to harass her mother and local shopkeepers refuse to sell goods to them, fearing that they might contract the disease.

Taking cognizance, Kolkata Police Commissioner Anuj Sharma tweeted: "We will take legal action against persons discriminating against such heroes who fight for us! I have asked for a report in the matter & action will be taken if any police personnel is found wanting, Sharma tweeted.

## After applause, docs, nurses face corona stigma in neighbourhood

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA,  
SOFIA SHAN &  
GARGI VERMA  
KOLKATA, CHANDIGARH,  
RAIPUR, MARCH 24

MANY CLAPPED Sunday to thank those at the frontline of the war against coronavirus, but the disease has also acquired a stigma with healthcare professionals treating Covid-19 patients not being allowed accommodation, doctors being trolled for pointing out scarcity in protective gear, and even the dead being deprived of dignity.

In Kolkata, a 30-year old woman, who is part of the National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases (NICED) team which tests samples for coronavirus, was told by her landlord in South Kolkata to leave the place. While she did not wish to be named, sources close to her said, it was only after the intervention of NICED authorities that the landlord let her stay on.

The nurses at a reputed private hospital in Kolkata where a 55-year old man died of Covid-19 on Monday were not so lucky. The hospital had to make alternate arrangement for 15 nurses after their landlord asked them to leave. A nurse, who did not wish to be named, said, "We are already working overtime and are under a lot of stress. If suddenly you hear from your landlord that you will have to leave, imagine the shock. It is very hard to find alternate accommodation. We were lucky because our hospital supported us."

In fact, when the staff of the private hospital carried the body of the 55-year old man strictly following health guidelines to Nimtolla crematorium, the locals not only raised objections but also heckled the medical staff. The police and the Kolkata municipal authorities finally ensured that the body was cremated.

In Rohtak, a Junior Resident at Pandit Bhagwat Dayal Sharma Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences, tweeted about the

paucity of masks. The first of her tweets read: "When they arrive, please send N95 masks and gloves to my grave. Taali aur thali b baja dena waha! Regards, frustrated sarkari doctor".

A series of tweets by Dr Kamna Kakkar—who is pursuing her Doctor of Medicine in Anaesthesiology and Critical Care—on protective gear faced a backlash with BJP IT Cell chief Amit Malviya questioning her credentials. Many called her "fake".

While she could not be contacted, Dr Dhruv Chaudhary, a Nodal Officer for COVID-19 at PGIMS Rohtak and Head of the Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine, told The Indian Express, that doctors all over were in need of more and more protective gear.

"She was posted in a trauma centre that day. One of her colleagues had a bit of a cough, and she got scared. What she has flagged, there has been scarcity, you all know about it," Dr Chaudhary said.

In Bilaspur, a doctor couple and their son quarantined since Monday, were traumatized after videos and messages vilifying them emerged in social media. The doctors were being accused of treating patients while they should have been quarantined on the social media. Several people also posted about boycotting their practice.

The doctors, SK Budhia and Rashmi Budhia, who run a private nursing home in the city, finally released statements narrating the facts. They had gone to Raipur airport to pick their son who was returning from the US. They said their son was screened in the US, at the airports in India, and was taken straight to the government hospital in Bilaspur for further tests. "While he has shown no symptoms, we being doctors know the protocol. Right now, he has been quarantined in one of the rooms of the house after the doctors advised us to take him home. We have isolated ourselves too. We are taking all necessary precautions," they said.

## 100 to 500 cases in 9 days, focus now shifts to medical infrastructure

ABANTIKA GHOSH  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

IN JUST nine days, the number of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) cases detected in India has jumped from 100 to over 500.

While it was 110 on March 15, the count stood at 519 on Tuesday, of which 39 have recovered. With one more death in Delhi, the toll is now 10. While the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare confirmed the death in Delhi, it did not give any details.

Compare this with the 45 days between the first case, in Kerala, on January 30 and the 100th on March 15. This may explain the sense of urgency in bolstering medical infrastructure and ensuring a lockdown—a shift from the focus over the last two months on travel advisories, and home and facility-based quarantine.

Several states, including Gujarat, Assam, Jharkhand, Goa and Madhya Pradesh, are setting up COVID-only hospitals. The Centre has asked states to speed up procurement of ventilators and personal protective equipment.

A ventilator prototype by AIIMS is under consideration and the government is in talks with PSUs for manufacturing them.



West Bengal has decided to convert Calcutta Medical College into a facility to treat COVID-19 patients. Partha Paul

"The central government has asked all the state governments to deploy fiscal resources for establishing additional medical facilities such as hospitals, clinical labs, isolation wards, expanding & upgrading existing facilities to combat the challenge posed by COVID-19. These facilities need to be well-equipped with ventilators, personal protective equipment, masks and drugs to treat the patients," the government said in a statement.

In a letter to state chief secretaries, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba asked states to earmark hospitals for COVID patients, and ensure foolproof surveillance and

contact tracing, the details of which are to be uploaded on the health online portal.

States have been asked to ensure that essential services and supplies remain open. These include hospitals, medical shops and establishments manufacturing of medicines, vaccines, sanitizers, masks and medical devices.

They have been asked to mobilise the civil machinery to supplement surveillance and strengthen rapid response teams at the field level, and to ensure that no suspected COVID-19 case or high-risk person is left out.

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

## 8 discharged from Mumbai hospital after testing negative twice in 24 hrs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
MUMBAI/SRINAGAR,  
MARCH 24

DAYS AFTER they tested positive for COVID-19, eight patients from Mumbai became the first to be discharged in Maharashtra on Tuesday. The discharged patients include an elderly couple who had travelled to Dubai with a group of 40 and were among the first to test positive in the city.

Elsewhere, in Srinagar, the Union Territory administration said the Valley's first coronavirus patient has recovered, while in UT of Ladakh two persons who had tested positive for the virus have recovered and were re-

leased from hospital.

While the authorities in J&K on Tuesday reported three fresh confirmed cases, including that of a Srinagar resident who has reportedly attended religious gatherings in Delhi's Hazrat Nizamuddin shrine, Darul Uloom Deoband in Uttar Pradesh, and also in Jammu, before arriving in Srinagar last week, no fresh case has been reported from Ladakh in the last five days.

Ladakh's Commissioner Secretary (Health) Rigzin Samphel said both cured patients have been moved to a quarantine facility and will remain under surveillance, PTI reported.

In Mumbai, among those dis-

charged is a three-year-old who had tested positive two days after her father was found positive upon return from the US. Her father remains admitted in Mumbai's Jaslok Hospital - his condition is now stated to be stable and he has been put off ventilator support.

The eight people discharged from Mumbai's Kasturba Hospital on Tuesday had tested negative for COVID-19 twice in a gap of 24 hours, it was informed.

Government guidelines mandate at least two tests to come negative before a patient is discharged.

Civic officials in Mumbai said four others who have recovered will be discharged in two days.

## Nearly 100 J&K students at Bangla border, High Commission tells them to stay back

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA &  
SHUBHAJIT ROY  
KOLKATA, MARCH 24

WITH INDIA'S international borders sealed since March 15 to check the spread of coronavirus, nearly 100 medical students, all from different parts of Jammu & Kashmir, were stranded at the Benapol-Petrapol border on the Bangladesh side.

The students said that their medical colleges had shut down due to the coronavirus scare and that they were told to leave the hostels and return home.

The Indian High Commission in Dhaka, however, said that it had spoken to the college authorities, who have agreed to keep the hostels open for the Indian students. The High Commission ad-



Stranded Kashmiri students at the international passenger terminal at Benapol land port in Bangladesh. Express

vised the students to not undertake any travel and to not try and cross into India.

In a series of tweets, the Indian High Commission said, "We are working to contain spread of COVID-19. Our PM has urged all to

'Take precautions & not panic'. In interest of public health, personal safety & safety of loved ones, we urge all to stay safe in present incidences and avoid non-essential movement/travel. We urge Indian students also to stay in

## 2 months after first case, Rs 15,000-cr booster shot for health facilities

ABANTIKA GHOSH &  
HARIKISHAN SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

ON DECEMBER 31, 2019, China informed the world about the mysterious pneumonia sweeping through Hubei. On January 7, 2020, COVID-19 was identified. A day later, the first meeting of the joint monitoring group was held in India. In effect, that is when India's preparation started — one of the earliest starts by any country.

The first COVID-19 case was reported on January 30. Fifty-three days later, the government announced an allocation to ramp up medical infrastructure, including ventilators.

In his address to the nation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "The central government has put in place a provision of Rs 15,000 crore for treating coronavirus patients and strengthening medical infrastructure... This will allow for quickly boosting the number of testing facilities, personal protective equipment, isolation beds, ICU beds, ventilators and other essential equipment. Simultaneously, training of medical and paramedical manpower will also be undertaken. I have requested the state governments to ensure that healthcare is the top-most priority at the moment."

For perspective, this is a little less than a quarter of the country's annual health budget.

Meanwhile, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba asked ventilator makers to increase production. "Four-five companies, which have capacities, have been asked to scale up production... One company assured production of 5,000 ventilators in three weeks, another offered 10,000 in

next two months, a third assured 4,000 ventilators," said a source.

While unofficial estimates put the total number of ventilators in the country at 40,000-50,000, there is no official confirmation. Besides ventilators, sources said the government has asked NITI Aayog to prepare a list of critical equipment required to treat COVID-19 patients.

NITI Aayog has discussed the issue with various stakeholders including FICCI and CII. It has identified over 20 pieces of medical equipment, and the options to increase their domestic manufacturing are being discussed.

According to government data from the National Health Profile, 2019, there are 11,54,686 registered allopathic doctors and 7,39,024 government hospital beds. For an estimated population of 135 crore, it means the health infrastructure is stretched quite thin. Another problem is that the private sector is not yet part of the management plan.

According to data collected by the Health Ministry till March 17, there are only 15,980 isolation beds and 37,326 quarantine beds available. For almost two months now, experts have pointed out that poor health infrastructure may be an impediment in the COVID-19 fight.

Dr T Jacob John, former head of the Indian Council of Medical Research's Centre for Advanced Research in Virology, earlier told *The Indian Express*: "Enough is a slippery issue. You have to break it down to distribution and quality. I don't think India has fair and just distribution of healthcare access. Second, I don't think the existing healthcare institutions are quality assured for all secondary and tertiary care."

## Manipur woman who returned from the UK is first case in N-E

JIMMY LEIVON &  
ABHISHEK SAHA  
IMPHAL/GUWAHATI,  
MARCH 24

THE NORTHEAST on Tuesday reported its first confirmed coronavirus case, with a 23-year-old Manipuri woman, who is a student in the UK, testing positive, according to officials.

Officials in Manipur said her younger brother, who flew in from the US and joined her in Kolkata, before the two flew to Manipur, has tested negative for coronavirus.

Dr K Rajo, director of health services in Manipur, said the patient had arrived in Delhi from the UK on March 18, and flew to Kolkata the following day.

A senior CISF official at Guwahati airport said the siblings took a flight from Kolkata to Imphal, via Agartala, on March 21. At Imphal, they headed straight to their home in Thangmeiband in Imphal West district.

Rajo said the woman's family contacted the control room on Monday after she showed symptoms of coronavirus. She was immediately taken to Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences in Imphal and put in an isolation ward. Her samples were sent for testing, which was confirmed as positive on Tuesday.

"There is no need to be alarmed. Her condition is fine; she doesn't need to be under ventilator," Rajo said.

Sources in the state government said 12 people, including seven family members have been quarantined.

An official dismissed social media rumours that the woman had tested positive before travelling to Manipur and that after reaching she had attended a wedding ceremony.

## PM: Newspapers have tremendous credibility, must spread awareness

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

NEWSPAPERS ENJOY "tremendous credibility", they reach the interiors of even villages, and it is thus imperative that awareness about coronavirus is spread through reports they publish, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday.

"It is essential to inform people about where (coronavirus) testing centres are, who should get tested, whom to contact to get tested, and follow home isolation protocols. This information should be shared in newspapers and web portals of the papers," Modi said during an interaction through video-conferencing with representatives of some of the largest national and regional print media organisations represent-

ing 11 languages.

On Monday, Modi had interacted with representatives heads of some electronic media organisations.

"The media has played a praiseworthy role in disseminating information to every nook and cranny of this nation," a statement issued by the government quoted the Prime Minister as saying. Modi, the statement mentioned, suggested that information about availability of essential items, and where to buy them, during lockdown can be reported in the regional pages.

He asked the media to act as a "link between the government and the people, and provide continuous feedback at both national and regional level". Modi also reminded the media groups of their "social responsibility towards the less privileged" and said that it is

critical to improve social cohesion to safeguard India's national security. He thanked journalists for their feedback.

During the interaction, Modi emphasised on the significance of social distancing and asked representatives of the media organisations to "generate awareness about its importance, inform people about the lockdown decision by states, and highlight the impact of the spread of the virus" by highlighting international data and case studies of other countries.

Stressing on the need to have a positive atmosphere and keep people's "fighting spirit up", Modi said there is a need to tackle the spread of pessimism, negativity and rumour-mongering, and that citizens must be assured that the government is committed to counter the impact of COVID-19.

## Just 35% Indian homes wash hands with soap, water before meals

HARIKISHAN SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

WHILE THE government and experts recommend washing of hands with soap and water as one of the basic protective measures against coronavirus, a survey done by the National Statistics Office (NSO) shows it's not a habit that comes easily to most Indians. According to the survey, while members of most households (99 per cent) wash their hands before a meal, only those in 35.8 per cent households do so with "water and soap/detergent".

The survey, the results of which were made public in a report titled 'Drinking Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Housing Condition' in November last year, covered

1,06,838 households (63,736 in rural areas and 43,102 in urban areas). According to the survey, a household was considered following the practice of hand washing "if majority of the household members usually washed their hands".

The survey revealed a wide gap in the hand-washing practice in urban and rural areas - while members of 56 per cent urban households reported washing their hands with water and soap before eating, only 25.3 per cent households in rural areas did so.

The report also revealed that the percentage of households whose members practise hand washing "with water and soap/detergent" before a meal were to be lowest in Jharkhand (10.6 per cent) and the highest in Sikkim (87.1 per cent).



Handwashing Day at a slum in Chandigarh. File

Apart from Jharkhand, Bihar (14.3 per cent), Odisha (15.1 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (23.8 per cent) and Tamil Nadu (27.3 per cent) made it to the bottom 5 states which fared poorly on hand-washing.

Sikkim is followed by Himachal Pradesh (86.2 per cent), Chandigarh (81 per cent), Punjab (77.5 per cent) and Delhi (73.5 per cent) as states where most people washed their hands the recommended way -

### WHO USES WHAT

Practice of hand washing before meal*	Rural	Urban	All
Wash hands with water and soap/detergent	25.3	56	35.8
Wash hands with water and ash/mud/sand etc	3.5	1.3	2.7
Wash hands with water only	69.9	42.1	60.4
Do not wash hands	1.3	0.5	1

\*Percentage of households

with water and soap.

Then, there are households where people wash their hands before a meal, but not with water and soap/detergent. About 60.4 per cent households — 69.9 per cent rural and 42.1 per cent urban — used only water to wash their hands before eating. About 2.7 per cent households -

3.5 per cent rural, 1.3 per cent urban - used "water and ash/mud/sand etc." to wash hands. There were about one per cent households that did not wash hands at all before a meal.

This low level of hand hygiene is likely to pose a major challenge as the country deals with COVID-19. In order



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL

Chouhan wins trust vote, Congress MLAs stay away

Cong backs PM's lockdown, questions lack of financial aid



SEEKING EXTENSION

AMID A lockdown, Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar has demanded extension to the paddy procurement date in certain parts of Maharashtra. On Tuesday, he tweeted, "Due to the #Coronavirus lockdown in Maharashtra, request Hon. Ram Vilas Paswan (@rvpaswan) to extend the date of procurement of Paddy from farmers in Nagpur, Chandrapur, Bhandara, Gondia and surrounding areas by 4-6 weeks."

WARY OF WARDS

THE HRD Ministry has written to all state chief secretaries about setting up isolation wards for COVID-19 patients in Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNV). JNVs, which are residential schools in rural areas, are mostly empty at present since students have been sent back home. There are about 570 JNVs, out of roughly 635 schools, which do not have students, even though teachers and their families continue to live on many campuses.

CARE FOR ANIMALS

THE CENTRAL Zoo Authority has written to chief secretaries and chief wildlife wardens of all states, declaring "upkeep and healthcare of wild animals in captivity" as essential services in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Authority has instructed states to ensure that the animals receive food and water, and have also asked the state governments to file timely reports to the Centre regarding the health of animals.

MILIND GHATWAI BHOPAL, MARCH 24

A LITTLE over 14 hours after he was sworn in, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan won the trust vote by voice vote Tuesday. No Congress legislator was present in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly for the trust vote.



CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan with Assembly officials. PTI

As a special session of the Assembly began, Chouhan moved a one-line proposal seeking the trust of the House. Chouhan thanked the two Independents, and the SP and BSP MLAs who voted in favour of the motion. Two other Independent MLAs remained absent. Speaking in the Assembly before the trust vote, Chouhan said the motion was necessitated because Governor Lalji Tandon had asked him to prove his majority in the House within 15 days.

He said his first priority was to prevent the spread of coronavirus. "There is a lockdown in 36 cities. The most effective way to tackle the outbreak is to break the chain. I appeal to MLAs to use their influence to educate people by making phone calls and to give them hope that we are capable of dealing with the crisis," he said.

EC postpones Rajya Sabha elections

New Delhi: The Election Commission on Tuesday postponed elections to 18 Rajya Sabha seats scheduled on March 26 in view of the lockdown imposed across India due to coronavirus.

"The prevailing unforeseen situation of public health emergency indicates the need for avoidance of possibilities of gatherings of any nature, which expose all concerned to possible health hazard. The poll process in the above said elections would necessarily include the gathering of polling officials, agents of political parties, support officials and members of respective legislative assemblies on the poll day, which may not be suitable in view of the prevailing unforeseen situation and related advisories in the country," the EC said in a statement.

The EC will review the situation and announce fresh dates later. ENS

Madhya Pradesh EOW closes land grab probe against Scindia

MILIND GHATWAI BHOPAL, MARCH 24

WHEN the fall of the Congress government became imminent, the state economic offences wing (EOW) closed an investigation into complaints against former Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, who is BJP's Rajya Sabha candidate from Madhya Pradesh.

Soon after the political crisis began, Gwalior-based Surendra Shrivastava reached the EOW headquarters in

Bhopal and submitted a fresh complaint, alleging that Scindia and his family members had falsified land documents. He said he had filed those complaints in 2014 but the EOW closed the cases in 2018 without assigning any reasons.

When he filed an RTI application, he was told the information was "confidential" and can't be shared.

The EOW accepted his complaints but did not register a case, saying it was verifying facts.

On Tuesday, a top EOW official told The Indian Express that the investigation was closed "four-five days ago" because on verification the agency did not find any merit in the complaints.

Shrivastava said he would now move court with all the documents in his possession.

MANOJ CG NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

THE CONGRESS on Tuesday supported the unprecedented 21-day lockdown announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi but criticised the government for not announcing a comprehensive economic package to protect the poor and the vulnerable from the ill-effects of the nationwide shutdown.

"What India has to do for containment of novel coronavirus disease is under duress...but the country and administration at the tehsil-level, subdivision-level ought to have been prepared. It is still strange that there is no package, no economic package, and food guarantees for the poor," senior Congress leader Anand Sharma told The Indian Express.

Senior party leader P Chidambaram tweeted, "Listened carefully to Prime Minister's address. Left me with a mix of emotions - relief, vindication, frustration, disappointment, worry, fear etc. The lockdown is late, but better late than never. Those who mocked the idea of a lockdown will do the country a great favour by remaining silent for 21 days. PM's announcement left a gaping hole. Who is going to provide cash to the poor that they need for the next 21 days..."

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

Sonia writes to PM, party's CMs on wage support to construction workers

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

CONGRESS PRESIDENT Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asking him to advise state governments to roll out emergency welfare measures, particularly wage support, to construction workers in distress.

She wrote similar letters to the CMs of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Punjab and Puducherry, where her party is in power.

In her letter to the Prime Minister, Gandhi said Building and Other Construction Worker's Welfare Boards in states have reportedly collected cess amounting to Rs 49,688 crores till March 31. "However, only an amount of Rs 19,379 crores had been spent," she said.

She requested the government "consider...to roll out emergency welfare measures, particularly wage support, to the construction workers who are in distress."

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

KV students to be promoted to next grade

New Delhi: Students of Classes 1 to 8 across all Kendriya Vidyalayas will be promoted to the next grade, irrespective of whether they appeared for exams or not. An order shared with all schools by the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan was communicated to all the schools Tuesday in wake of classes being disrupted because of the COVID-19 outbreak. ENS

कार्यालय कार्यपालन अभियंता लोक निर्माण विभाग, दुर्ग संभाग दुर्ग

क्रमांक 2434/2019-2020/संशोधन दुर्ग दिनांक 21/03/2020 आपके द्वारा प्रकाशित Reference ID No. 202002008931, 202003009045, 202003009188 Advt No.- 77498, 77582, 77691 को अपरिहार्य कारणों से निम्नलिखित संशोधन किया जाना है:-

Table with 4 columns: विवरण, पूर्व में प्रकाशित तिथि, संशोधित तिथि, समय. Includes NIT NO-20 details.

Table with 4 columns: विवरण, पूर्व में प्रकाशित तिथि, संशोधित तिथि, समय. Includes NIT NO-21 details.

Table with 4 columns: विवरण, पूर्व में प्रकाशित तिथि, संशोधित तिथि, समय. Includes NIT NO-22 details.

Table with 4 columns: विवरण, पूर्व में प्रकाशित तिथि, संशोधित तिथि, समय. Includes NIT NO-25 details.

हस्ता./ कार्यपालन अभियंता लोक निर्माण विभाग दुर्ग संभाग दुर्ग

TAMIL NADU SLUM CLEARANCE BOARD MADURAI CIRCLE EXTENSION NOTICE. Due to Administrative reasons, the tender for the work mentioned in the Tender Notice No: SCB/562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567 & 568/ DB/ 2020, dated: 12.03.2020 and Re-Tender Notice No. 072/ DB /2020, dated: 18.03.2020 scheduled on 27.03.2020 is hereby extended to 03.04.2020.

GREATER CHENNAI CORPORATION Solid Waste Management Department Short e-Tender Notice. Short E-Tender is invited for the purchase of Bleaching Powder for the use of all Zones in Greater Chennai Corporation by Superintending Engineer (SWM) in Solid Waste Management Department.

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY ई-निविदा सूचना सं. M-2-EnHM-AII-2020. अतिरिक्त मजदूरों के इंतजाम (EnHM & P) अन्तर्गत भारत के राष्ट्रिय एवं उन्की ओर से निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु दिनांक 21.04.2020 को 15.00 बजे तक ई-निविदा (Single packet system) आमंत्रित की जाती है।

KERALA CASHEW BOARD LIMITED (KCB) T.C-29/4016, Women's College-Bakery Junction Road Vazhuthacaud, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India-695014. e-Tender Notice. Kerala Cashew Board Limited invites e-tenders through e-procurement portal for import of 1000-3000 Metric Tonnes of quality Dried Raw Cashew Nut of 2020 crop of Cote D'Ivoire origin (e-Tender Id: 2020\_KCBL\_32669\_1).

GOVERNMENT OF CHHATTISGARH, WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER HASDEO CANAL W/M DIVISION, JANJGIR- CHAMPA DISTT. JANJGIR-CHAMPA(C.G.) e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE (SECOND-CALL) CORRIGENDUM NO. 1. DETAILS OF NIT No. 27/SAC/2019-20, Dated: 06.03.2020. Following corrigendum is issued against NIT No. 27/SAC/2019-20, dated: 06.03.2020 G-NO. 77729 DATE- 07.03.2020.

TAMIL NADU SLUM CLEARANCE BOARD SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, CHENNAI CIRCLE-I. NOTICE INVITING SHORT TENDER. For and on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, an invitation/notice/consent to the interested persons to apply for the Procurement with EMD and other details.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, MECHANICAL DIVISION J&K Lakes & Waterways Development Authority, Dockyard Complex Ishber Nishat Northern Foreshore Road Srinagar-191121. FRESH TENDER NOTICE. Gist of e-NIT No. 60 OF 2019-20 Dated: 20.03.2020. For and on behalf of Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir UT, Executive Engineer, Mechanical, J&K LDA, Srinagar, invites online e-bids in two-(2) cover system from Registered Firms / Agencies having expertise as detailed in the tender document for the following works:

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR DEPARTMENT OF MATERIALS MANAGEMENT (IMPORT SECTION) SHER-I-KASHMIR INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES SOURA, SRINAGAR, JAMMU & KASHMIR-190011. Subject: Abbreviated Notice inviting e-Tenders for supply of Kits, Reagents and Antisera etc. on 2 year rate contract. For and on behalf of Lt. Governor of Jammu & Kashmir Union Territory, e-Tenders under Two Bid System are invited through Director Sher-I-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences from Original Manufacturers/their authorized Distributors/Dealers for Supply of Kits, Reagents, Antisera etc. on Two Year rate contract basis to be reckoned from the date of allotment of rate contract.

verka Phulo Phito, Pure Khao Phyo. THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS' FEDERATION LTD. SCPO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022. EPABX NO. 0172-5041812-13. Notice Inviting Tender. Short Term e-Tender Notice. Name of the Item: Supply of Steam Coal having Calorific value not less than 5500 kcal/kg. Contract Period/Quantity: 1500 MTs. Consignee/ Place of Tender Opening: Verka Amritsar Dairy Ph No. 73555-99892, 73555-48163. Tender Cost (Rs.): 500/-.





## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY  
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

### HOME & NATION

A 21-day lockdown is extraordinary. Government, people must come together — supply chains and social trust must not break

THE WAY WE conduct ourselves in these 21 days will be critical in our fight against the coronavirus.” With these words, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a measure unprecedented in India’s 72-year-old history: A 21-day nationwide lockdown from March 25. Never have the people of the country been asked to stay within the confines of their homes for this long a period, not even when the country has fought wars. Yet extraordinary times demand extraordinary measures. As PM Modi underlined, “stringent social distancing and staying within the *Lakshman Rekha* of our homes is the only prevention against the coronavirus”, the only way to break its transmission cycle. The PM warned, again, against complacency: “It took 67 days for the number of corona-affected persons to reach one lakh. The number of infected doubled in just 11 days and the virus infected another one lakh in merely four days”.

There will be social and economic consequences and the PM did not equivocate on the challenges. He spoke of the vulnerable sections, and, as in last week’s speech, emphasised the imperative to be compassionate. He lauded the frontline workers, doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers, expressed gratitude to safai karamcharis and praised the private sector and civil society. A reworked social compact — more compassionate — will be necessary to confront the challenges posed by the lockdown. It is now up to civil society, government agencies, the healthcare and corporate sectors to take their cues from the PM’s speech and ensure that the burden of fighting the pandemic does not fall too heavily on those at the margins, the migrant and daily wage labourers, the rickshaw pullers and others for whom these 21 days could prove to be the toughest. The Centre and state governments will need to work together, setting aside their political differences, to ensure that there is no shortage of essential commodities and the supply chains are not broken.

Earlier in the day, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced a slew of measures that could soften the blow of a 21-day lockdown. The deadline for filing of income taxes for the financial year 2018-19 has been extended, as has the last date for filing GST returns. Sitharaman also announced that the threshold for taking companies through the insolvency and bankruptcy proceedings has been increased from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1 crore. This will prevent creditors from taking small and medium-sized companies, who may be facing temporary cash flow management issues due to the lockdown, and hence are unable to meet their obligations, through the IBC process. The Centre has also advised state governments to transfer funds to construction workers from the cess fund collected by the labour welfare boards. As PM Modi said, “21 days is a long period”. It’s now up to the authorities and the people to own and implement his message — to ensure that not just supply chains, but also social trust, isn’t broken.

### OTHER CONTAGIONS

Under threat of coronavirus, diseases of racism and intolerance, each as old as cholera, resurface. They must not spread

AS INDIA INCHES towards a possibly more intense phase of the coronavirus pandemic, a related and sadly predictable phase of a disease of another sort may be kicking in — there have been reports that people from the Northeast are being scapegoated, and professionals at the frontline of the battle are being discriminated against, or are being given empty accolades instead of material help. How disturbingly easy it can be to define people from the Northeast as the Other was demonstrated in 2012, when a whisper campaign threatening violence against them spooked migrant workers from the region into an exodus from the cities. It succeeded in causing a crisis of confidence that stretched across half the nation. Now, apprehensions are gaining ground that amid a crisis that underlines inter-dependence, some people, led by a toxic mix of anxiety and prejudice, could be turning on each other.

The trigger may be new but the faultlines, and the intolerance that they frame, are old. The popularity of whitening creams exposes the racism that underpins large sections of society, for instance, and in several cities, perceptions of purity have always decided who gets to rent property, and who is disbarred. Now, some Air India staffers have been urged to vacate their homes because they crewed flights of mercy to evacuate Indians from hot zones. They put their lives on the line for the sake of fellow citizens, flying into the heart of a poorly understood danger. Yet while they are applauded as heroes in the public domain, their neighbours are striving to maintain the most extreme social distances from them. Some doctors working against the coronavirus have also suffered a similar fate — even as they continue to work gruelling hours with insufficient facilities, unable to screen populations to the required extent, and thanked ritually by a public display of gratitude on Sunday.

Dealing with pandemics does not only consist of isolating and treating the sick. That is the job of specialists. The pain of social disruption often surpasses the effect of the disease itself, as families lose loved ones, breadwinners lose livelihoods, structural relations collapse and general insecurity sets in. These scars can only be healed by a society that holds together, instead of seeking scapegoats to vent its anxieties on.

### PRESSING RESET

A new possibility is making itself felt: Of a return to social media platforms for solace, and a sense of community

A REMARKABLE THING happened on Facebook: Marc Rebillet, a French-American DJ and producer, had been playing live shows on the platform for the past two days, when in the middle of his set, he blanked out. Viewers, about 5,000 of them spread around the world, watched him panic, stumble, unravel, till a friend called him on the phone and talked to him, calming him down. He resumed playing as messages of support flooded in — almost each one said they knew exactly how he’d been feeling. It was strange to watch this play out on social media, seen to be a cesspool of mediocre exchanges, where harmful rumours often masquerade as information, where cancel culture reigns supreme. But right now, if you’re not online, where are you? If you’re not online, how are you?

This past week or so, ever since the global lockdown to impede the spread of COVID-19 was initiated, a possibility has been making itself felt: Of a return to various platforms for solace and a sense of community. Even as some people let their anxieties sharpen their prejudices, the uncertainty of the corona crisis, the prospect of staying indoors for days on end, may also be triggering empathy and compassion on social media. The virus has completely dismantled normalcy. And for some, that includes their prejudices, their inherent mistrust of the other, their need to use differences to identify who they are as a people. COVID-19 is forcing people to hit reset in the way they perceive each other, and, in some important ways, they must let it.

You are not alone in this as long as you have social media. Of course, there will be reason to continue to be suspicious of it — because the nature of the beast will not change no matter how many lives are disrupted. Perhaps it’s only a matter of time till everyone returns to the old ways. But till then, there is a tantalising possibility of using the space for its original purpose: To tell people that they have more in common with each other than they know.



SANJAYA BARU

AS PEOPLE RETURN home from distant lands, global value chains get disrupted and cross-border movement comes to a grinding halt, new theories are being propounded about the end of globalisation and the return of the all-pervasive “nanny state”. This is not surprising, given that a commonplace watchword of the era of globalisation has always been that while “all economics is global, all politics is local”. Governments, democratic and authoritarian, can only act locally even against global threats, unless they cross borders to challenge such a threat. Even governments wedded to the ideology of *laissez-faire* have been forced to act in response to local pressures of one kind or another.

A public health crisis caused by a rapidly spreading virus has naturally sounded a “call to arms” for governments, just as in 2008-09 a financial crisis with global contagion effects also mobilised governments. In 2008-09 it was an essentially “Trans-Atlantic” financial crisis that forced governments around the world to act locally to insulate themselves. This time it is a “Eurasian” epidemic, so to speak, that is forcing governments around the world to act locally. The only difference, however, is that, in 2008-09, there was greater commitment to multilaterally deal with a financial crisis on the part of the Group of 20 nations than is as yet on display today. Hopefully, the initiative taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to mobilise the G-20 will encourage a more purposeful multilateral response. In response to the Covid-19 crisis, some in India have begun writing the obituary of India’s globalisation and hailing the virtues of inward-oriented nationalism.

Much of the “touch-me-not” and “social distancing” narrative encouraged by fear of pandemics plays into the ideology of inward-looking, sectarian nationalism that right-wing governments across the world have been promoting. Political movements that have been opposed to cross-border migration are using the scare generated by Covid-19 to seal borders and stop travel. Admittedly, this is needed as a short-term measure to arrest, or at least reduce, the pace of transmission of the virus. However, to imagine that the current episode marks a turning point for globalisation of people and economies is not just an historically ill-informed view but also a self-defeating one. Mankind has faced

# Virus in a globalised India

The view that corona crisis marks a turning point for globalisation is historically ill-informed, self-defeating

Much of the ‘touch-me-not’ and ‘social distancing’ narrative encouraged by fear of pandemics plays into the ideology of inward-looking, sectarian nationalism that right-wing governments across the world have been promoting. Political movements that have been opposed to cross-border migration are using the scare generated by Covid-19 to seal borders and stop travel. Admittedly, this is needed as a short-term measure to arrest, or at least reduce, the pace of transmission of the virus. However, mankind has faced many such challenges posed by nature and other species but has continued to move, co-habit and populate around the world.

many such challenges posed by nature and other species but has continued to move, co-habit and populate around the world. Political and administrative barriers to the natural movement of people are creations of the 20th century.

Consider the example of the Indian state that has had the highest incidence of Covid-19 and the best response to it — Kerala. It is one of India’s most globalised economies that depends on services and commodity export, labour migration and tourism. Can Kerala afford to shut its borders to the world? Hardly. While Kerala has always had an enlightened and responsible political leadership, its present government has been quick to put in place a robust strategy to deal with Covid-19, acutely aware of the vital importance of links with the rest of the world for Kerala’s economy, indeed the Indian economy as a whole. Not only do millions of Malayalees working in the Gulf, one of the regions badly struck by Covid-19, bring in billions of dollars every year into India, but Kerala exports hundreds of thousands of trained nurses that staff hospitals around India and the Gulf.

Kerala’s is just one, if obvious, example of the importance of global links for India and Indians. It is not an accident that next to Kerala the most Covid-19 affected states have been Maharashtra, Telangana and Haryana — all homes to Indians living abroad. Recent arguments from “swadeshi” enthusiasts that Covid-19 will contribute to greater inward-orientation of the economy does not take into account the globalisation of the middle classes, ranging from working class families dependent on incomes from the Gulf, to peasants manning the agrarian and livestock economies of Canada and Italy and the millions of the technically qualified who live in the developed West, especially the United States.

A highly regarded supporter of the BJP recently tweeted that in hindsight it would be appreciated that the Narendra Modi government was very smart in walking out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement because its membership would have exposed India to dependence on Covid-hit China. The fallacy of this argument lies in the fact that India walked out of the RCEP precisely because

China and other countries were not willing to allow more Indians to live and work in their countries! Indeed, for three decades now, India has sought a multilateral agreement for the movement of people, not just merchandise and capital, and the Indian diaspora is viewed as an asset. India cannot afford to enter a post-Covid world that reduces, rather than expands, opportunities for Indians to earn a living from the global economy.

In the short term, there will be flight to safety of people worried about a pandemic, as there is of capital during a financial crisis. Many Indians abroad will want to return home either for family or financial reasons. It remains to be seen how long such people choose to stay back in India given the fact that they have all been “voluntary migrants”, leaving India for greener pastures. Unlike the millions of “distress migrants” who leave home under social, political and economic pressure and compulsion, India’s middle classes travelling to developed countries have all been voluntary migrants who had chosen to socially secede from their home country. Apart from the migration of middle-class workers, students and professionals, that of the elite is also not going to be reversed. Children of scores of well-placed business persons, political leaders, officials and diplomats have all migrated to the developed world — a phenomenon best described as a “secession of the successful”.

Wealthy businessmen who have been taking pride in their “non-resident” status, buying fancy property in Europe but minimising tax liability in India, are now desperately seeking permission to bring their globalised families home in search of more easily accessible healthcare. Influential people in government, business and other professions may like their children to migrate out of India in normal times, even use medical facilities abroad for normal procedures, but when there is a public health scare and millions queue up for help, they find accessing private hospitals and doctors easier at home than in Covid-hit West. When normalcy returns, the globalised Indian will fly away once again.

*The writer is a policy analyst and former media advisor to prime minister of India*



APOORVANAND

WHILE I fortify myself against the coronavirus, my heart goes out to Avinash, Usman and scores of young men and women like them who don’t have the luxury to home quarantine themselves. In the past four weeks, they have moved from one camp to another, and one lane to another, in Chand Bagh, Khajuri, Chaman Park, Mustafabad and Shiv Vihar. These young men and women have been responding to distress calls from those who were uprooted and displaced from their homes by the communal violence that wrecked several parts of Northeast Delhi last month.

How do I ask Avinash to withdraw his room? He is looking for an alternative space to store relief material. The space he had in the university is not available anymore because of the coronavirus scare. Avinash needs a space that would be easily accessible to volunteers and donors. The number of volunteers is decreasing because hostels are being shut down, and students are being forced to move out of Delhi. Yet, the valiant effort continues. These youngsters are doing what is called relief work. Relief from what? From the violence which pushed many people into destitution? From the indifference of their neighbours, which forces them to accept relief from strangers? Relief from the cruel state apparatus, which hates them for being what they are? From the police which looks

## SOLIDARITY AND DISTANCING

We need to build more bridges, as in Northeast Delhi’s relief camps

at them as an unnecessary nuisance?

These young relief workers are not enforcing any state mandate. They are trying to bridge the social distance which led to the violence in the first place and remove the animosities stoked by the riots. But while doing their work, they are noticing that the rift between communities is actually widening.

A relief seeker is a diminished person, in her own eyes and the eyes of her neighbours, whether from the same community or what is now deemed as the “other” community. Relief is not treated as the right of those who have been wronged. It is seen as an unnecessary burden on the state, which tries its best to evade it. All claims are regarded with suspicion and people are asked to fit their claims in slots prepared by the state.

The youth responded to the call of their inner voice and risked their lives while arranging relief. They had to face the wrath of the police and the hostility of their neighbours. They were detained by the police, even insulted, but this did not deter them. They have become sociologists, ethnographers and quasi-legal hands while helping the victims of the violence register FIRs and negotiating with government officials to verify the compensation claims. They have shown amazing grit, determination and patience — qualities we badly need in the times of the coronavirus pandemic.

Many people have stressed the need for greater solidarity to face this new crisis. How do we do that if we don’t spare a moment for those who are being othered and denied their humanity every moment? They are the most vulnerable people in these times. They have been effectively invisibilised under the pretext of confronting the pandemic. A doctor friend had warned that the virus can cause havoc in crowded places like relief camps. But we didn’t know where to move these roofless people. Now many of them have moved back to their charred and violated homes while many more have been refused re-entry by their landlords and are being forced to look for accommodation within their community. Such people are being told to not live in a perpetual state of victimhood.

In conversations on compensation for the riot victims, the BPL line is mentioned several times. This makes me think of the impact the pandemic would have on our lives. Philosophers have, in fact, talked about the state of exception created by the pandemic and have warned that this could become the new normal.

I pray that our brave comrades remain safe from this virus. Their souls have taken much, they have been coarsened and softened at the same time.

*The writer teaches Hindi at Delhi University*



## MARCH 25, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

ASSAM DISRUPTIONS  
MOVEMENT OF GOODS from different parts of the country to Assam was disrupted when Chhatra Parishad (I) and Youth Congress (I) workers launched their “economic blockade” programme at three points in north Bengal. The agitation is against “continuous oppression of non-Assamese in Assam”. At 10 am, volunteers put up road blocks at Siliguri, the nerve centre of road and rail links with Assam and at the Tinbati crossing in Jalpaiguri. The picketing launched at Cooch Behar continued. Police arrested 500 volunteers at Siliguri on the charge of obstructing road traffic. Chief Minister Jyoti Basu told newsmen in Calcutta that the

number of arrests might increase. Basu, however, claimed that truck movement along the national highway was resumed later in the day.

MEET ON AFGHANISTAN  
INDIA MAY SPONSOR a Geneva-type conference to help find a way out of the Afghanistan impasse. The invitees would be countries “directly interested” in Afghanistan because of repercussions Kabul’s developments have on them. In this category come India, Pakistan, Iran and possibly Saudi Arabia. Apart from these countries, the United States and the Soviet Union are indispensable for any such conference. China is also there, and

Britain and France are likely to be included. Mrs Gandhi has consulted among others Swaran Singh, the former external affairs minister, who is visiting Pakistan and some other countries in April.

SHAH IN CAIRO  
THE AILING AND homeless former Shah of Iran arrived in Cairo. President Anwar Sadat said he would be staying here permanently. Sadat, first lady of Jihan Sadat, and Vice President Hosni Mubarak and his wife greeted the Shah at Cairo airport when he arrived on a flight from his last refuge Panama. For the Shah it was a return to the only country in the world publicly willing to have him.



# 9 THE IDEAS PAGE

## Remaking the future

COVID-19 is creating inflection points for the global economy, will bring changes that will be lasting in healthcare, security, governance



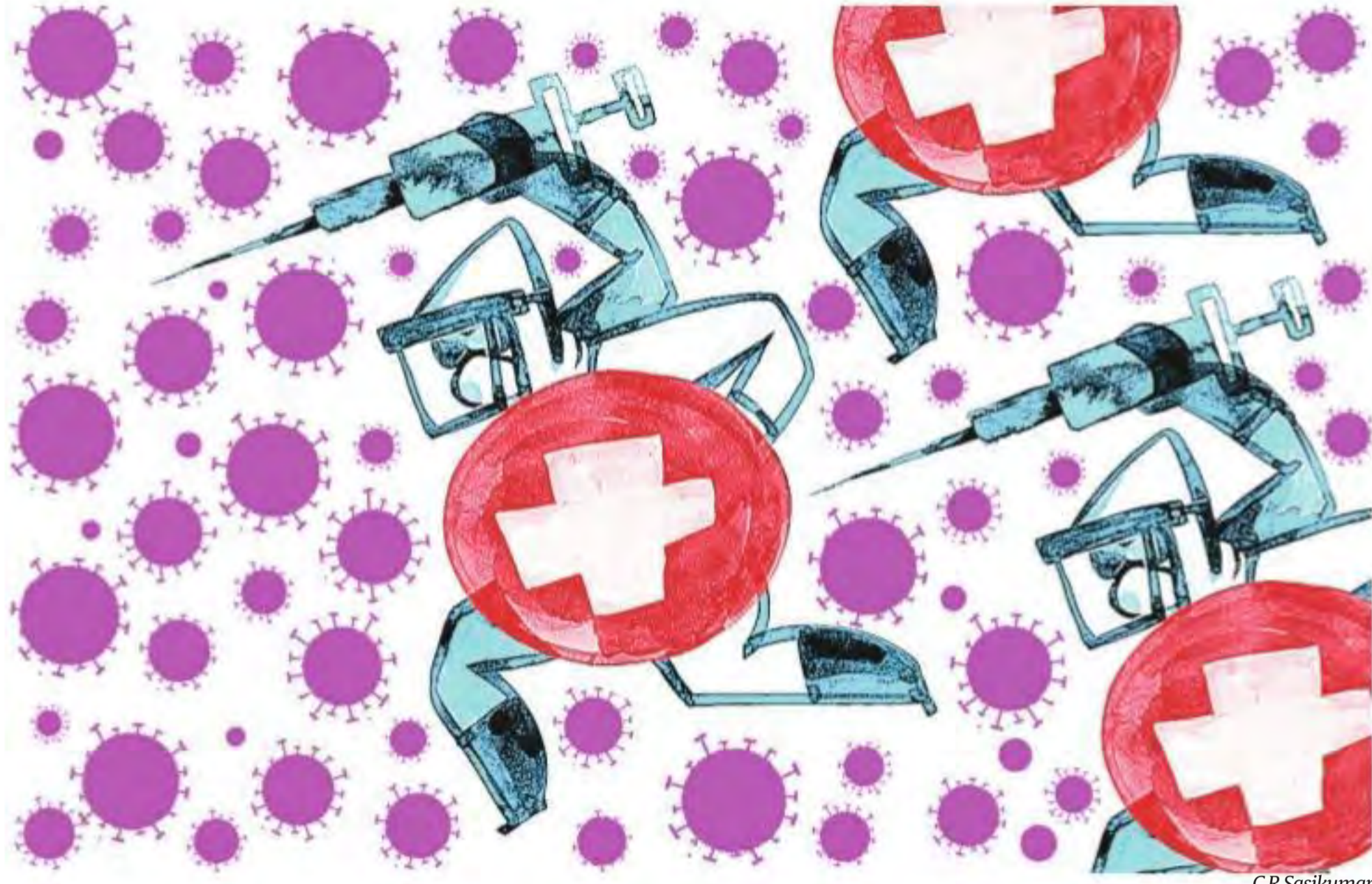
SUJAN R CHINOY

THE GLOBAL ECONOMY is beginning to reel under the unexpected effects of COVID-19, the coronavirus that has left scarcely any part of the world unscathed. The steep cut announced in the US federal interest rate, down a full percentage point to a range of 0-0.25 per cent, is a desperate bid to shore up liquidity in the world's largest economy at a time when stocks have tanked and the bond market is in disarray. Goldman Sachs has predicted that the US economy's growth rate will be flat for the first three months and in the next three months, it would contract by 5 per cent. With unemployment rates set to double even faster than they did during the financial and economic crisis of 2008, the stage appears set for a recession that will not be limited to the US. It will compound the economic slowdown in the world's second-largest economy, China, which is the largest trading nation, and possibly set off a chain reaction.

The hardest hit, globally, are the services sectors and inter-dependent supply chains in the manufacturing sector. Business in travel, tourism, hospitality and public entertainment including restaurants, malls and theatres is at a complete standstill, destroying the means of livelihood of millions. Global manufacturing took a hit with the appearance of the coronavirus in Wuhan, and China's lockdown. Now, with the pandemic spreading its tentacles around the world, it resembles a knockout punch. One wonders if the current situation will strengthen the trend towards protectionism and emphasis on domestic manufacturing even if it is against the principles of market forces. A febrile and debilitated globalisation featuring closed borders and disrupted trade and supply chains, ironically, coincides with a pressing need to evolve a fresh outlook on global interdependence and cooperation in dealing with pandemics and a host of other issues.

The unprecedented challenge from COVID-19 is also creating new inflection points for the global economy. E-commerce, including online start-ups and delivery apps for groceries and merchandise, are likely to see a spurt in business, provided supply chains hold out. Online entertainment platforms, TV serials and home entertainment will see a surge in scope and stock value, but new productions will be difficult to create on account of restrictions, unavailability of locations and a depleted workforce.

The shuttering of schools and universities obviously means a huge boost for online education, distance learning and self-employment opportunities. Home learning with one-on-one lessons could spawn a new industry for those with adequate access to computers, broadband and wifi connectivity, with the advantage going to nations that enjoy greater internet penetration. This will also mean huge stress on existing bandwidth capacities for network and telecom service providers. Network capacities and related infrastructure, whether national or international, are not easily mutable, being capital intensive and time-consuming to develop. Throttling back on high definition (HD) serv-



CR Sasikumar

ices to free up bandwidth congestion in Europe is already being mullied by big operators such as YouTube, Netflix, Amazon Prime and Apple TV.

These circumstances no doubt place a fresh premium on getting ahead in the race to develop 5G capabilities to mitigate existing limitations, and this is true of the healthcare sector in particular. Global resilience in dealing with pandemics would be greatly enhanced by 5G technology, especially in large and populous countries like India.

The next generation of telecom infrastructure will have to be dovetailed, in terms of cost and spread, with the needs of mass healthcare schemes such as the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, especially to cater to the most vulnerable segments in far-flung rural societies. They are the mainstay of the labour force for food production, agro-based industries and manufacturing activity in smaller towns and villages. On their health and vitality will depend the lifeline of an entire nation. Arguably, there is a compelling need to look beyond urban-centric approaches in devising the response to pandemics.

In densely populated slums and even overcrowded prisons, social distancing is not an easy option. The challenges faced by India notwithstanding, there is widespread praise and popular support for the strong personal appeal by Prime Minister Modi to the people of India for their cooperation. The success of the "Janata Curfew" on March 22 and the tribute paid by the masses from their doorsteps and balconies to the silent workers who provide essential services have raised the nation's morale.

The pandemic can be expected to goad overwhelmed healthcare systems around the world to do better, point them in new directions and provide investment opportunities in preventive and palliative care. Robotics and unmanned ground vehicles will play as much a role in patient access and care during contagions as they will in an era of information warfare.

Budgets around the world are likely to see a spike in allocations to the healthcare sector, and it can only be hoped that the higher

The next generation of telecom infrastructure will have to be dovetailed, in terms of cost and spread, with the needs of mass healthcare schemes such as the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, especially to cater to the most vulnerable segments in far-flung rural societies. They are the mainstay of the labour force for food production, agro-based industries and manufacturing activity in smaller towns and villages. On their health and vitality will depend the lifeline of an entire nation. Arguably, there is a compelling need to look beyond urban-centric approaches in devising the response to pandemics.

standards of hygiene being implemented everywhere will create a new normal for the future. Above all, it is in the interest of all nations, rich or poor, to ensure that testing kits, drugs and vaccines are available at affordable prices, given that security against pandemics is indivisible.

If one were to go by the experience of China and others like Singapore, there is a big role that artificial intelligence (AI), facial recognition and similar other technologies can play in contact tracing. Singapore's Government Technology Agency (GovTech) and its health ministry have developed a smartphone app called TraceTogether, which works by exchanging short distance Bluetooth signals between phones to detect other participating users within close proximity of two meters.

Clearly, the notion of national security, or global security, is being reshaped by COVID-19. Armed forces everywhere, often deployed in confined spaces ranging from bunkers to tanks and armoured personnel carriers to naval ships and submarines will also face tough choices in stemming the spread of the coronavirus without compromising national security.

Beyond hard power and the threats of hybrid warfare, nations will have to rethink possible future scenarios and create numerically adequate forces of well-equipped pandemic experts, doctors and healthcare workers, to be the new footsoldiers in this battle.

A vaccine for COVID-19 will eventually emerge, but the world can avoid paying a heavy price by not treating pandemics as one-off events. Given the incidence of SARS, MERS and similar outbreaks in the past, COVID-19 is hardly an unexpected "black swan" event. The human race may have to contend with many more of nature's calamitous challenges. PM Modi has done well to grasp the nettle and take the lead within SAARC and the G-20 framework to forge a new global compact.

The writer, a former ambassador, is currently the director-general of the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi. Views are personal

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"It is possible to hold the Chinese government accountable for its handling of the crisis and its spread of misinformation without maligning a nation of more than 1.3 billion people or the people of Chinese descent who make their homes in nations around the world." — THE NEW YORK TIMES

## No sinners in politics

Floor test has become a farce, as we witness constitutional anarchy



KAPIL SIBAL

THERE ARE no sinners in politics. This applies to those who hang onto power and to those who usurp power. But the vena acrobatics of politicians are slowly eating into the vitals of our democratic culture embedded in the various provisions of our Constitution.

The Tenth Schedule to the Constitution was meant to deal with the politics of opportunism — to prevent "Aaya Rams and Gaya Rams". It provides for the disqualification of members of Parliament and legislative assemblies if any such member voluntarily gives up membership of the political party to which he or she belongs or votes against the whip issued by the party in the course of proceedings in Parliament or the legislature. Initially, the disqualification principle did not apply if one-third of the members of a political party severed their allegiance to the party on whose symbol they were elected and joined another political party. This led to mass defections, thereby destabilising elected governments. The Tenth Schedule was then amended and the one-third provision done away with. The Tenth Schedule now will not apply unless two-thirds of the members of a political party merge with another political party. The two-thirds rule is difficult to circumvent except in small states where the strength of the legislative assemblies allows for such mergers.

To avoid the applicability of the Tenth Schedule, members of legislative assemblies are now using another route to destabilise elected governments. Under Article 190(3)(b) of the Constitution, any legislator is entitled to resign from the House. The Speaker, of course, has the power to rule that such a resignation is neither voluntary nor genuine. The Speaker, upon enquiry, has the power to reject such a resignation.

What the BJP has done in the recent past is to use this provision to topple democratically-elected governments. The means used are unique. The dissidents in the ruling party are whisked away in a private chartered plane, paid for either by the BJP or their friends, to a state where the party is in power. The dissident legislators are sequestered in resorts to savour the benefits of a five-star culture. We presume that no such dissident would risk his or her membership unless he or she has received ben-

efits either in cash or in kind or both. The modalities of payments, if any, are worked out in advance. Comfortably ensconced and protected by the police force in the state in which BJP is in power, these dissidents then submit their resignations en masse, to the Speaker of the assembly of which they are members. In the meantime, they are kept incommunicado and not allowed to use their mobile phones. All attempts made by those in power in the state for access to the dissident legislators is denied. Those captive legislators may be willing "captives" for obvious trade-offs.

In Uttarakhand, the Congress legislators accompanied by BJP stalwarts were whisked away in a chartered flight to Delhi. This led to the imposition of the President's Rule in the state, which was later set aside. The Speaker, in the meantime, had disqualified those legislators. Harish Rawat came back to office as chief minister. Similarly, dissident legislators in Karnataka were flown to Maharashtra in July 2019 in a chartered plane, and taken to a resort. The coalition government floundered and lost majority.

The latest such enterprise launched by the BJP has succeeded in Madhya Pradesh. Paid for chartered flights came in handy. Some of the flights took off from a high-security zone. This requires the consent of the defence establishment in New Delhi. In Karnataka, these dissidents were kept "captive" and enjoyed five-star hospitality. The Karnataka police ensured that all attempts made by the Congress to access the dissidents failed. En masse resignations of 22 MLAs, including six ministers kept "captive", were handed over by the BJP to the Speaker. The Governor, taking note of the resignations, concluded that the Kamal Nath government did not enjoy the confidence of the House. He called for a trust vote — this was despite the fact that no claim was made by the BJP to form an alternative government.

This is democracy at work. This is yet another virus that has afflicted the political system. I dare say, there is no cure for it. The antidote can only be provided by representatives of the people who believe in the rule of law, are committed to democratic traditions and embrace constitutional values. The truth, however, is just the opposite. Governors, political parties, other constitutional authorities, the police and state governments are facilitators and hotbeds of intrigue in dismantling democracy. What we are witnessing is constitutional anarchy. The courts, however, watch in dismay and uphold such actions. The floor test has become a farce.

The writer, a senior Congress leader, is a former Union minister

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### PLAN FOR WEAKEST

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The reality check' (IE, March 24). Despite months of the impending threat of the coronavirus pandemic, the government did not come out with a comprehensive plan to address the existential issues of thousands of unorganised and migrant workers. Meanwhile, lockdowns have forced these workers in megacities to leave for their home states in choked trains and buses. Contrary to the "containment" objectives of lockdown, their reverse migration has created the opposite effect in their respective states. There are reports of resistance from apprehensive villagers back home. Bihar administration had to accommodate the returnees in village schools and panchayat bhawans.

LR Murmu, Delhi

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The reality check' (IE, March 24). The COVID-19 crisis has precipitated unscientific messages which could be as dangerous as the virus. We must depend on modern science. Precautionary measures taken by governments should be designed by policymakers who are well versed in science. We must obey rules and follow guidelines. But workers in the unorganised sector, construction workers and poultry farmers are the most vulnerable sections of the society. They must be helped by the governments.

Tapomoy Ghosh, Burdwan

### TASKS AHEAD

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'After Janata curfew' (IE, March 23). PM Modi's 'Janata Curfew' call was met with a positive response. Across urban India, people stayed indoors. The scale of response showed that people are aware of the challenge and the resilience they need to display. We are in for a long haul and unless governments can work out effective ways of lessening the scale of disruption, it will be hard to

### 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.

ensure voluntary compliance with social distancing. Many states are under complete lockdown while transport services have been suspended. These are tough but necessary measures to control the spread of infection but the job of governments goes much beyond these measures. These now need to be backed by more challenging management of the situation.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

### CHINA'S CALL

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'China and WHO, a new story', (IE, March 24). China's rise as a global power and a potential candidate that can challenge and rebalance US dominance in global affairs came on the back of its phenomenal rise in economic stature. Unlike Washington, Beijing desists from taking sides in contesting diplomatic standoffs unless it is a party to it. The recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and China's initial mishandling of the situation is going to pose some tough questions. Beijing's medical diplomacy can buy it sometime but cannot help it escape its answerability to the global community.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

## Remembering Hedgewar

RSS imprint on India is deep, yet its founder, is unknown to most Indians



RAJIV TULI

MOST OF the people in Bharat today know about the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Whether one loves it or hates it, most Bharatiyas have heard the name of the organisation. But very few would know about Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, its founder. His pictures rarely appear in the media even on his birth anniversary, which falls on the first day of the Hindu new year, that is, chaitra shukla pratipada. This year it falls on March 25.

Barring a few, no one — not even a majority of those who vow allegiance to his ideology — would remember this. One reason for this is the RSS doesn't believe in celebrating individual birthdays. Its cause or ideology holds supreme in its ecosystem, above any individual. Interestingly, it was Hedgewar who ensured that the organisation should adhere to this principle. However, millions of swayam sevaks, at more than 70,000 daily shakhas of the RSS, salute his legacy by doing adhya sarsangchalak pranam (salutation to the founder-chief of the RSS) on his birth anniversary.

It is time now to take a closer look at his legacy as the organisation he founded has become a deep and decisive influence in all spheres of the Bharatiya society.

Hedgewar was born in 1889, the year Independent Bharat's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was born. In 1989, the

birth centenary of Hedgewar, the Sangh — through its swayamsevaks and various organisations run by them — gave a massive boost to what is today known as sewa karya or service projects. A thousand projects were launched in 1989. Today, there are over 1,50,000 such projects. These projects are the outcome of a legacy, which believed in the unity of the Bharatiya society cutting across all barriers. Hedgewar was also a freedom fighter of eminence. But there is hardly any mention of him in contemporary history books due to the dominance of Left historians in academic and intellectual fields.

Hedgewar was a member of Yugantar and Anusheelan Samiti. He deliberately joined the National Medical College in Kolkata to work with Aurobindo, Trailokya Nath Chakraborty and Rash Behari Bose. After completing his degree, he returned to Nagpur. The Central province only had 75 doctors then, but he decided not to join the medical profession. Instead, he chose to work for the independence of Bharat.

Hedgewar disagreed with the Non-cooperation Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi because the Khilafat struggle aimed at restoring the Caliphate in Turkey was a part of it. But he travelled and addressed meetings, inspiring people to join the freedom struggle. In May 1921, he was arrested on charges of sedition for his objectionable

speeches. The hearing in the case began on June 14, 1921 in the court of a British judge, Smelly. After hearing Hedgewar's statement, the judge exclaimed: "His defence is even more seditious than his original speech." In his judgement, delivered on August 19, 1921, the judge ordered Hedgewar to give an undertaking that he would not deliver seditious speeches in future for a period of one year and that he furnish a bail of Rs 3,000. Hedgewar refused to comply with the order and the judge sentenced him to rigorous imprisonment for a year.

He was released in July 1922 from Ajani jail and a public reception was organised by the Congress where senior leaders, Pandit Moti Lal Nehru and Hakim Ajmal Khan, spoke. On July 12, 1930, at a programme in Nagpur, veteran RSS member L V Paranjape announced that Hedgewar was going to participate in a "jungle satyagraha". After Paranjape spoke, Hedgewar announced his resignation as sarsangchalak to join the "jungle satyagraha" and Paranjape was appointed sarsangchalak pending Hedgewar's return. Hedgewar courted arrest in Nagpur on July 21, 1930. He broke the "jungle kanoon" (Forest Law) with 11 people and was arrested. The Congress organised a rally in his support. He was tried the same day and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for nine months. This was Hedgewar's second jail

term. Hedgewar's satyagraha was one of the most successful programmes of the civil disobedience movement of the Central province. He took over as the sarsangchalak after returning from jail on February 21, 1931.

Contrary to the narrative that is presented about the role of the Sangh and its leadership during the Independence struggle, Hedgewar was at the forefront in the fight against the British rule. However, the Sangh never tried to take credit for it: The basic ethos ingrained by Hedgewar in the RSS prevents it from claiming credit for any work done by an individual or even by an organisation. The result is that we see the largest voluntary organisation of the world working quietly for the transformation of society. Its detractors often consider its silence to be its weakness, which is not correct.

"Friend, a person's greatness is not recognised by his current position in public life. But by the length of the shadow he casts over history and remains relevant over time." These were the words of a communist colleague of Dattopant Thengadi, the founder of Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, in the Rajya Sabha in response to a Congress MP's light-hearted remark, "Who knows Dr Hedgewar? But, see the entire world knows about Pandit Nehru."

The writer is member of the state executive of Delhi RSS



SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

# Quarantine works better than airport screening: study

A new ICMR paper's hypothetical model finds quarantining 50% of symptomatic cases within 3 days of symptoms would reduce overall cases by 62% and peak number of cases by 89% in an optimistic scenario. In a pessimistic scenario, these numbers would be 2% and 8% respectively

**KARISHMA MEHROTRA**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

ON MONDAY, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) published research from February 27 that attempts to "identify rational intervention strategies that might work towards control of the outbreak in India" of COVID-19. The research compares the effectiveness and feasibility of two approaches — attempting to contain an outbreak at the border, and quarantining symptomatic cases within the country.

**What is the key finding?**

The research makes a case for post-travel tracking rather than border containment. It uses mathematical modelling to show that spending resources on quarantining symptomatic cases can achieve a meaningful impact on the disease burden (assuming an "optimistic" scenario), rather than attempting to achieve infeasible levels of containment at the borders.

At the same time, it also accounts for the inevitability that an outburst of cases would make lab confirmations impractical. Therefore, the paper proposes "symptomatic surveillance" to be included with quarantine measures.

The government has focused on random sampling of patients with severe symptoms and quarantining positive cases. In the initial weeks of rising cases in India, asymptomatic travellers were not tested.

**How does the paper interpret the feasibility of border containment?**

The researchers found that if India screened all symptomatic airport arrivals from China, the epidemic would occur in 45 to 47.7 days. If all asymptomatic arrivals from China were screened, India would need to identify at least 75% of asymptomatic in-

fect arrivals in order to achieve an "appreciable" delay in the outbreak. If 90% were identified, the delay would be 20 days.

The argument is that there would be little impact from addressing only symptomatic cases, but also that covering the necessary asymptomatic infections (almost all of them) is "practically infeasible". Further, there is no accurate, rapid test to achieve the required detection levels, the paper notes, citing other studies to show that thermal screening can miss at least 46% of infections. The only way to achieve the needed detection levels, in fact, may be isolation of all arrivals from the specified airports.

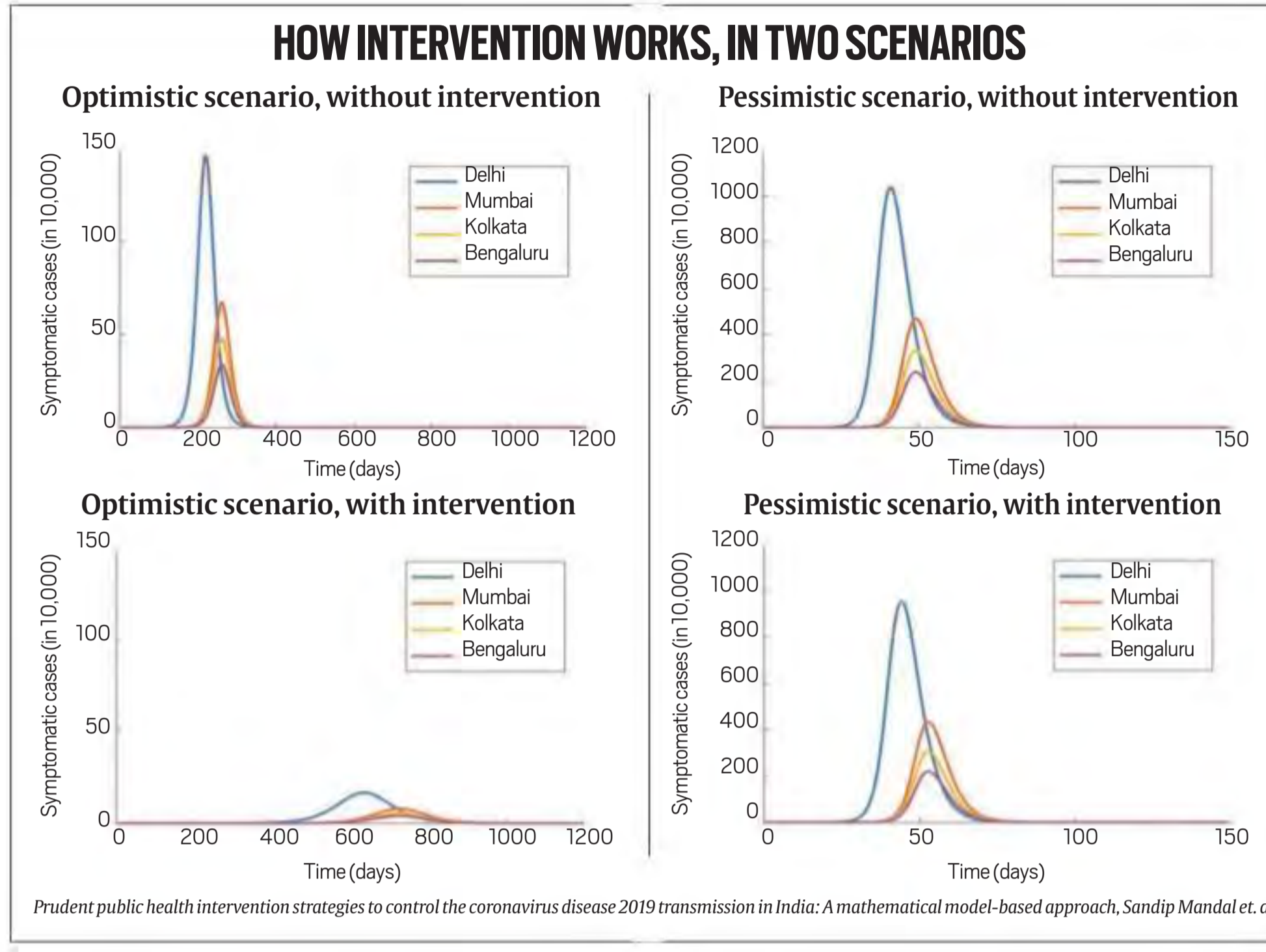
"Any containment strategy focused on symptomatic infections, no matter how comprehensively tends to be negated by the asymptomatic infections that escape detection and can go on to cause onward transmission in the community... Resources may be better spent on the mitigation of infection in the community," the paper says.

**And how does it model the effectiveness of quarantining symptomatic cases?**

The researchers built their model with two scenarios. The optimistic scenario assumes that each infected person transmits the virus to 1.5 other people (known as R0 or reproduction number) and that asymptomatic infections do not infect others. The pessimistic scenario assumes each infection transmits to four other people, and that asymptomatic cases are half as infectious as symptomatic cases.

A different study by scientists at the Institute of Mathematical Sciences in Chennai shows that India currently has a R0 around 1.7, much lower than other badly-hit countries. Research is beginning to show that asymptomatic cases do transmit the infection, but it's still unclear by how much.

**What are the findings from the ICMR paper's models?**



Prudent public health intervention strategies to control the coronavirus disease 2019 transmission in India: A mathematical model-based approach, Sandip Mandal et al

The models show that once community transmission occurs, the epidemic's peak and duration can be greatly affected by quarantining symptomatic cases — but only in the optimistic scenario. This relates to a concept called "flattening the curve" — spreading the number of cases over time. This may not decrease the total number of cases, but would

lighten the load on the healthcare system at any point of time. The paper's hypothetical model found that quarantining 50% of symptomatic cases within three days of their symptoms would reduce overall cases by 62% and the peak number of cases by 89% in an optimistic scenario. The intervention would reduce over-

all cases by 2% and the peak number by 8% in a pessimistic scenario. **Which regions does the model factor in?** The model looked at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Bengaluru, assuming that these metros would be the initial focal points of transmission. The paper uses another paper's

global risk assessment to deduce that the probability of an infected air traveller coming to India as the final destination is 0.209%, with the highest relative import risk in Delhi (0.064%) followed by Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Kochi.

The graph of Delhi's outbreak is significantly higher than that of other cities because of these inputs. In fact, Maharashtra has more cases than Delhi, and Kerala is a significant focal point that the paper seems to have missed.

For Delhi, intervention leads to a projected decrease of cases from 150 per 10,000 to less than 25 per 10,000 at the epidemic's peak in an optimistic scenario. In a pessimistic scenario, intervention reduces cases from over 1,000 in every 10,000 to under 1,000 in every 10,000. (see graphs left)

**What are the other takeaways?**

The paper cites other research that estimates eight to 10 severe and 40-50 non-severe COVID-19 cases for every death. Another paper looking at the Diamond Princess cruise ship estimates 26% of the entire population to get infected, and one in 450 infected individuals to die. The ICMR paper deduced that 5% of the infected will need intensive care, and half of those will need mechanical ventilation.

**What are the limitations of the model?**

The model assumes that cases are only coming from certain regions in China. We now know that many cases in India have actually come from the Middle East and the UK. It inputs only 500 daily arrivals from COVID-19-affected regions in China. Before travel from China was closed, 3,565 passengers were arriving from there every day.

The model also ignores urban-rural migration. It makes estimates about rail and road travel between cities. Other parameters about COVID-19 are admittedly not clear, such as the average duration of the infection, the incubation period, and the fatality rate.

# Tracking food-supply chain

In lockdown, how prepared is India to meet supply requirements of the most essential of items, food?

**HARISH DAMODARAN & PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS**  
NEW DELHI, PUNE MARCH 24

ON TUESDAY, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the Centre and state governments will take all steps to ensure the supply of "essential items" during the nationwide 21-day lockdown to combat the novel coronavirus. How prepared is India to meet the supply requirements of the most essential of items, food?

**What is the domestic availability situation in foodstuffs? To what extent would the restrictions impact it?**

There's no real issue with the production or supply of most agri-commodities, starting with foodgrains. As on March 1, stocks of wheat and rice with the Food Corporation of India (FCI) was around 77.6 million tonnes (mt) — over three-and-a-half times the minimum operational buffer-cum-strategic stock of 21.04 mt required to be maintained for April 1. And the bumper new wheat crop will arrive in *mandis* from next month.

The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed) was holding 2.25 mt of pulses stocks as on March 19 — even as fresh market arrivals of *rabi* pulses such as *chana* (chickpea), *masur* (red lentils) and *matar* (field pea) have started.

The outbreak's impact will not be on production, given that most *rabi* crops are close to ripening, if not already harvested. Only the marketing of the produce at the *mandis* and reaching it to the consumer will be impacted. This will not be a "supply",

but a "supply chain" problem — arising from the restrictions on movement. But for the rice, wheat, and pulses with FCI or Nafed, even that should not be a concern — as the grain has to be only moved from godowns and supplied to ration shops. This can, in fact, be an opportunity for the Centre to significantly offload its surplus foodgrain stocks — including to regular grocery shops at open market rates.

**What about milk, sugar, and edible oils?**

These, again, are produce not brought to be sold in *mandis*.

Dairies procure milk directly from farmers or through bulk vendors. The sugar that mills produce comes from cane sourced directly from growers. Two-thirds of the edible oil consumed by India is imported. There too, the problem of the crop having to first come to an APMC (agricultural produce market committee) *mandi* does not arise.

In the current lockdown situation, there are actually mitigating factors on the supply requirement front, particularly for the three food items. The most important of them is the demand destruction due to the shutting down of HORECA (hotels, restaurants and catering) businesses. With hardly any business-to-business (B2B) sales happening, the demand for milk products, sugar and edible oil is now only in the business-to-consumer (B2C) segment.

This has had two effects. On the one hand, direct consumer sales of milk, curd, sugar, and branded oils have gone up in the past few days, with households buying more in anticipation of shortages. R S Sodhi, managing director of the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing

Federation, claims that the daily sales of Amul milk are currently about 37 lakh litres in Delhi-NCR and 22 lakh litres in Maharashtra, as against the normal levels of 31-32 lakh litres and 18-19 lakh litres respectively.

But on the other hand, sales of skimmed milk power (SMP) to ice-cream companies and cheese to pizza makers have crashed, as consumers aren't eating out and focusing on basic foods. This has led to SMP prices falling to Rs 250 per kg from Rs 320-330 per kg till about 15 days ago, with some Maharashtra-based dairies mainly into B2B sales slashing their procurement price for cow milk from Rs 32-plus to Rs 20 per litre.

In sugar too, mills are seeing less buying from the sweetmeat, soft drinks and HORECA segments. Oil marketing companies are not lifting ethanol, a byproduct of sugar manufacture used for 10% blending with petrol. The reason: People aren't taking out their vehicles that much.

The demand destruction on account of B2B is, nevertheless, ensuring that existing supplies are enough to meet the requirements of household consumers.

**So, the supply of which food products are likely to be affected?**

Basically fruits and vegetables (F&V), which are sold through APMC *mandis*. Fruit traders and commission agents at Navi Mumbai's Vashi market have announced suspension of operations from Wednesday. Such closures are, however, more likely in terminal markets close to cities than the primary APMCs, where the bulk of the farmers bring their produce.

The fear of the pandemic, as of now, less

in the rural areas — although Jitender Singh Hooda, a sugarcane farmer from Kheri Bairagi village of UP's Shamli district, anticipates a 25-30% harvesting labour shortage in the coming days. Many migrant labourers have returned to their villages in Bihar, which will hit harvesting when crushing operations in Uttar Pradesh are at their peak, he said.

**What steps should the government take in the coming days?**

In his first address to the nation on dealing with COVID-19, the Prime Minister said all necessary steps would be taken to ensure "no shortage of essential items like milk". That specific reference has, perhaps, helped in the largely unhindered supplies of milk from the rural hinterland to urban centres across India. But the same approach has not been seen in other food items.

Inter-state movement restrictions have resulted in tomato-laden trucks from Madanapalle in Andhra Pradesh not crossing over to Bengaluru or brinjal and beans from Chikkaballapur in Karnataka not reaching consumers in Hyderabad. Alphonso mangoes and grapes not being allowed to move freely will hurt growers in Ratnagiri and Sangli just when their crop is being harvested.

There are reports of F&V collection and distribution centres of online grocers being shut by force; sugar mills in Uttar Pradesh running out of lime, sulphur and HDPE bags procured from Rajasthan and Gujarat; and labourers engaged in grading and packing of produce not being permitted to go to their workplaces.

Impediments such as these need to be removed soon.

AN EXPERT EXPLAINS

## 'Virus will stay; difficult to lock down for long'



MARC-ALAIN WIDDOWSON

**Will this virus stick around and become endemic?**

This is not yet clear, but I believe it will, indeed, become endemic. We should expect that the majority of the people globally will get exposed in the next year or two. A vaccine is the best hope for now — say, in 18 months. And importantly, Indian vaccine companies can get to manufacture it — decentralise the manufacture to avoid global bottlenecks. Even then, the virus is likely to be around.

**Studies show the illness is mild in most people and severe in those above 60, with underlying conditions. What is the most effective treatment?**

Yes, most cases are mild and do not reach the lungs, but just the throat airway. But when the virus does infect deeper tissues, you get a strong inflammation of the lungs that makes it difficult to breathe. Supportive treatment with oxygen and ventilators is key for severe cases. Several drugs are in trial stages and many have efficacy, but it's too early to say

which ones and when.

**Can India's hot summer slow the spread of the virus?**

The virus can stay on surfaces for several days in the laboratory. It depends on the type of surface and environment. But the level does drop off quite quickly (in the heat). We are not sure what the clinical significance is of finding small amounts of the virus on surfaces. Certainly, surfaces like door handles that are used by many should be avoided or cleaned regularly.

**There is a view that if 50% of the population is exposed to the virus there is a stronger chance of building immunity against it.**

This is the concept of herd immunity — that if enough people get it then transmission will slow down, and non-immune people will be protected. The problem with the current lockdown is that it means in Europe there will be more susceptibles when it (the virus)

comes back next winter.

**There is this big debate on testing in India currently.**

There is a good chance that there will be some areas in India that can be overwhelmed with COVID-19. Testing helps to understand the scale of the problem and yes, it will protect the contacts of the positive persons. At the same time, transmission may be from asymptomatic persons, so it is unclear if the test-and-isolate strategy will prevent transmission effectively. Preparing innovative ways of delivering oxygen and conducting research on the best methods of clinical care in low-resource settings is key.

(Dr Marc-Alain Widdowson is an infectious disease epidemiologist who worked for 18 years with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Since 2019, he has been Director of the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, Belgium. Dr Widdowson spoke with Anuradha Mascarenhas.)

**CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK**  
DAILY COUNT OF DEATHS, INFECTIONS

United Kingdom: 8,163	Germany: 31,991	Italy: 69,176	China: 81,591
France: 20,149	US: 49,768	Spain: 39,676	South Korea: 9,037
Iran: 24,811	Switzerland: 9,117		

TOTAL CONFIRMED: 407,485      DEATH COUNT: 18,227

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at midnight on March 25

**DEATHLY SILENCE IN NEW YORK, CITY THAT NEVER SLEEPS**

**UNITED STATES** infection curve is rising almost vertically. Of the 600 deaths in the country, 125 have occurred in New York City alone.

**ITALY'S** daily new deaths continued to fall — from the peak of 795 on March 22 to 649 on March 23 and 601 on March 24

**INDIA COUNT: 519 (10 DEATHS)**

**TOP 10 STATES**

29 Punjab	30 Delhi
28 Haryana	33 UP
32 Rajasthan	
33 Gujarat	89 Maharashtra
	35 Telangana
37 Karnataka	95 Kerala

**REST OF INDIA**

Ladakh: 13	Tamil Nadu: 15
Chandigarh: 7	Andhra Pradesh: 8
Madhya Pradesh: 7	West Bengal: 9
Jammu & Kashmir: 4	Uttarakhand: 4
Odisha: 2	Himachal Pradesh: 3
Bihar: 3	Chhattisgarh: 1
Puducherry: 1	

Union Health Ministry update at 10 pm, March 24. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states with most cases are listed above.

**40 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 8 STATES ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

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

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# 11 THE OUTBREAK THE WORLD

**PANDEMIC WATCH**



The crowd at a stall in Colombo, Tuesday. AP

**SRI LANKA**  
**100 COVID-19 cases reported**

Colombo: Sri Lanka's coronavirus cases Tuesday reached 100 with authorities reporting four new cases, health officials said. In view of the rising number of the novel coronavirus cases globally, the country has suspended all international flights arriving in the country. "We have found four more today and all of them were arrivals from abroad — three from Italy and one from the US," Dr Anil Jasinghe, Director General of Health Services, said. On Tuesday, the authorities opened Colombo for the first time in four days after a continuous curfew as part of the lockdown.

**BANGLADESH**  
**Ex-PM Zia to be released for six months**

Dhaka: Bangladesh on Tuesday initiated a process to "conditionally" release jailed former prime minister Khaleda Zia for six months amid the coronavirus outbreak in the country, Law Minister Anisul Huq told PTI. The 74-year-old opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party chief is serving a 17-year prison term in two graft cases since February 8, 2018. "The decision has been taken on humanitarian ground," Huq said. He said the decision was taken in line with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's directives and considering the age of the former prime minister.

**ICELAND**  
**First COVID-19 death confirmed**

Reykjavik: Icelandic health authorities said Tuesday that a patient in her 60s had died from COVID-19, marking the country's first confirmed death from the coronavirus. According to a statement from The National University Hospital of Iceland, the Icelandic woman had also been suffering from a chronic illness. It is the first death from COVID-19 to be confirmed. According to Icelandic media reports, an Australian tourist who was confirmed to have the virus died early last week. But the man's symptoms were not typical of COVID-19 and doctors have yet to determine the exact cause of death.

**OVER 16,000 CASES, 130 DEATHS**  
in a day in the United States

**LOCKDOWN COULD DESTROY U.S.**  
warns Trump, pushes to relax measures

**17,000 DEATHS, 400,000 CASES**  
have been reported globally so far

## US may exceed Europe as epicentre: WHO

**AGENCIES**  
WASHINGTON, MARCH 24

THE COVID-19 outbreak in the United States has the potential to exceed that in Europe, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said Tuesday as the number of reported US cases surges.

WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris told reporters during a virtual press conference that 85 per cent of the new cases reported to the global body overnight had come from Europe and the US, now the two "main drivers of the outbreak".

The latest WHO coronavirus daily situation report — published late Monday, before the overnight figures — showed that Europe reported 20,131 new cases in the preceding 24 hours, while the United States reported 16,354, more than doubling its total caseload.

The US also for the first time registered over 130 deaths in a day due to coronavirus, taking the total number of fatalities to 550 by Monday night.

Asked whether the United States could overtake Europe as the epicentre of COVID-19, Harris said: "We are now seeing a very large acceleration in the number of cases from the US, so it does have that potential. "We cannot say that that is the case yet but it does have that potential."

"They have a very large outbreak and an outbreak increasing in intensity."

Trump on Tuesday defended his push to relax the coronavirus lockdown in the United States, warning that the measures could "destroy" the country.

"A lot of people agree with me. Our country — it's not built to shut down," he said on Fox News. "You can destroy a country this way by closing it down."

Trump signed an executive order aimed at preventing hoarding of critical medical supplies amid the coronavirus



**HOSPITAL SHIP:** The USNS Mercy leaves San Diego on Tuesday for Los Angeles to help free up hospital beds. AP

outbreak.

"Very simply, we will not allow anyone to exploit the suffering of American citizens for their own profit," he asserted.

In New York, now one of the world's biggest virus hot spots, authorities rushed to set up the thousands of hospital beds they will need in just weeks to protect the city's 8.4 million people. More than 12,000 people have tested positive in the city and 125 have died. A state-wide lockdown took effect Monday.

The mayor warned that the city's hospitals are just 10 days away from shortages in basic supplies, while the state's governor announced plans to convert a New York City convention center into a hospital.

"This is going to get much worse before it gets better," New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said.

**EXPLAINED**  
**E.**  
**Concern over Trump stance**

THE TRUMP administration's continued stance of saying no to a total lockdown has led to concern among some lawmakers and experts. Trump has drawn comparisons to the flu as well as automobile accidents, both of which, he says, cause "more" casualties. While economic fallout is regarded as a vital concern, many have questioned if that is where immediate priority lies.

### Impasse over \$2-trn aid package continues

**NEW YORK TIMES**  
NEW YORK, MARCH 24

THE SENATE'S top Democrat and the treasury secretary said on Monday night that they were close to a deal on a nearly \$2 trillion economic stabilization package to respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

The announcement came hours after Democrats voted for the second time to block action until they had secured more worker protections and restrictions on bailed-out companies.

"We expect to have an agreement in the morning," Senator Chuck Schumer, Democrat of New

York and the minority leader, told reporters just before midnight, as he wrapped up a final meeting with Steven Mnuchin, the treasury secretary. "There are still a few little differences," he said.

Mnuchin said the two sides were very close to a compromise, though both sides cautioned there was no final agreement and the negotiations remained fluid. The two men called President Trump just before they broke for the night.

Schumer said the president's response had been "very positive," despite a tweet in which Trump accused Democrats of sabotaging the package and wanting "the virus to win."

### Italy's cases likely '10 times higher'; toll spikes by 743

**REUTERS**  
ROME, MARCH 24

THE NUMBER of cases of coronavirus in Italy is probably 10 times higher than the official tally of almost 64,000, the head of the agency that is collating the data said on Tuesday.

Latest figures show over 6,000 people have died from the infection in barely a month, making Italy the worst-affected country in the world. On Tuesday, an official said the country recorded 743 deaths, surging to break a two-day trend.

However, testing for the disease has often been limited to people seeking hospital care, meaning that thousands of cases have certainly gone undetected.

"A ratio of one certified case out of every 10 is credible," Angelo Borrelli, the head of the Civil Protection Agency, told La Repubblica newspaper, indicat-

ing he believed as many as 640,000 people could have been infected in the country.

He said the biggest difficulty facing Italy was a shortage of masks and ventilators — a problem that has dogged the health system since the contagion first surfaced in the wealthy northern region of Lombardy on February 21. Italy is trying to import stocks from abroad, but Borrelli said nations like India, Romania, Russia and Turkey had halted such sales.

**German state to take in Italian patients**

Hospitals in the German state of Saxony will take on at least six Italian patients who are unable to receive treatment in their own country, state premier Michael Kretschmer has said.

"The Italian government asked us a few days ago whether we could help by taking care of patients who are not being taken care of in Italy," Kretschmer said.



Medical workers at a hospital in Rome on Tuesday. Reuters

### G-20 leaders likely to discuss virus in virtual summit

**SHUBHAJIT ROY**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

AMIDST THE global COVID-19 pandemic, moves are afoot to schedule an extraordinary G-20 leaders' summit through video-conference this week. Saudi Arabia, which is the chair of the G-20 this year, is going to take the lead in the scheduling of the video-conference, which could be conducted as early as Thursday.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and discussed the global situation in the context of the pandemic.

"The two leaders discussed possible cooperation within the G-20 framework and the forthcoming video-conference in this context," a statement by the Ministry of External Affairs said.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar spoke to his counterpart in the EU, Vice President and High Representative Josep Borrell. "Assured him of our

fullest support in the return of EU citizens from India," Jaishankar tweeted.

Jaishankar also had a phone conversation with Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Earlier, Modi had called up Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and discussed the possibility of a G-20 leaders' summit through a video-conference. The Indian leadership had also reached out to Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison in this regard.

Finance ministers of the G-20 have already spoken to each other over video conference. This could be followed by a G-20 sherpa video conference on Wednesday or Thursday.

A video conference of senior health professionals of SAARC countries is proposed to be held on March 26 to exchange experiences on combating the spread of COVID-19, officials said on Monday. This will be a follow-up to the video-conference of SAARC leaders on March 15.

### Pak announces multi-billion package, cases rise to 956

**SAJJAD HUSSAIN**  
ISLAMABAD, MARCH 24

PAKISTAN PRIME Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday announced a multi-billion stimulus package to combat the deadly coronavirus and to facilitate poor people in the prevailing circumstances as the country's COVID-19 cases rose to 956.

Khan said 200 billion rupees have been allocated for the labour class to mitigate their sufferings.

He said the government was highly conscious of its responsibilities and it was due to various policies and steps that the coronavirus was still contained. Khan said that the "situation is in a flux and all options are on the table, including curfew if needed."

Khan said exports and industry are vital for the economy and 100 billion rupees have been reserved for release of tax refund immediately. He said 150 billion rupees have been reserved for poor families across Pakistan under which every family will get an assistance of three thousand rupees on monthly basis. PTI

**514 MORE DEAD IN 24 HOURS, TOLL NOW NEARLY 2,700**

### In Spain, elderly people in nursing homes 'abandoned, if not dead in their beds'

**NEW YORK TIMES**  
NEW YORK, MARCH 24

THE SPANISH army has found elderly people abandoned in several nursing homes, raising alarm for those most vulnerable and in need of care with much of life in the country shut down.

This comes even as 514 more people have died over the past 24 hours, raising the death toll to 2,696, as the number of infections surged towards 40,000, as per a PTI report. The number of people who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 rose by nearly 20 percent to 39,673, the report added.

The government will be "forceful" in its response to those who abandon older people, Margarita Robles, Spain's defense minister, said Monday in an interview with Telecinco, a Spanish television channel.

Robles said emergency military units dispatched to disinfect



Military personnel in Bilbao, northern Spain. AP

nursing homes had found some residents "absolutely abandoned, if not dead in their beds."

The defense ministry said that dead bodies had been found in multiple nursing homes that had discharged large number of employees in the wake of the outbreaks, but did not provide further details, El Pais, a daily broadsheet, reported.

Workers at nursing homes have been calling for protective equipment as residents and fellow employees became infected with the coronavirus, leaving them short-handed and at personal risk in their workplaces.

Representatives of the industry have called on the government to support them, rather than criticise them.

### UK lockdown as virus death count leaps by 87 to 422

**REUTERS**  
LONDON, MARCH 24

THE UNITED Kingdom went into lockdown on Tuesday as the number of coronavirus deaths jumped and the government called for 250,000 volunteers for the health service, as it announced a temporary hospital would open in London with help from the military.

The death toll from coronavirus in the UK has jumped by 87 to a total of 422 — the biggest daily increase so far.

In a TV message on Monday evening, Prime Minister Boris Johnson ordered people to stay at home, nearly all shops to close and banned social gatherings. However, public transport in London was busy during the morning rush hour, and streets were far from deserted amid confusion over the government's advice to workers.

"These measures are not advice, they are rules and will be enforced, including by the police," health minister Matt Hancock told parliament.

### China to lift lockdown in most of Hubei province

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
BEIJING, MARCH 24

Chinese authorities said Tuesday they will end a two-month lockdown of most of coronavirus-hit Hubei province at midnight, as domestic cases of what has become a global pandemic subside.

People with a clean bill of health will be allowed to leave, the provincial government said, easing restrictions on movement that were unprecedented in scale. The city of Wuhan, where the virus was first detected in December, is to remain locked down until April 8.

China barred people from leaving or entering Wuhan because

ginning January 23 in a surprise middle-of-the-night announcement and expanded that to most of the province in succeeding days. Trains and flights were cancelled and checkpoints set up on roads into the central province.

The drastic steps came as the coronavirus began spreading to the rest of China and overseas during the Lunar New Year holiday, when millions of Chinese travel.

The virus raged for weeks in Wuhan, the provincial capital, and surrounding cities. Hospitals overflowed, and temporary ones were hastily set up to try to isolate the growing number of infected patients.

**'THE SECURITY ARGUMENT IS THE ONE ALWAYS USED TO JUSTIFY LOSS OF PRIVACY'**

### For Moscow's quarantined, 100,000 cameras are watching

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MOSCOW, MARCH 24

A VAST and contentious network of facial recognition cameras keeping watch over Moscow is now playing a key role in the battle against the spread of the coronavirus in Russia.

The city rolled out the technology just before the epidemic reached Russia, ignoring protests and legal complaints over sophisticated state surveillance.

Since last month, thousands of Muscovites have been confined to their homes for 14 days

of compulsory quarantine after returning from virus-hit countries, being in contact with those infected or diagnosed with mild symptoms. Police have logged their details and warned them that sneaking out into the city and daily visitors could lead to a five-year jail term or deportation for foreigners.

"We are constantly checking that this regulation is being observed, including through the use of automated facial recognition systems," Mayor Sergei Sobyenin wrote in his blog in February.

Around 100,000 cameras have now been linked to arti-



Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow. Reuters

cial intelligence systems that can identify people being filmed. The

remaining cameras are due to be connected soon.

Moscow police said last week that the cameras that are linked have allowed them to identify almost 200 people who broke quarantine rules.

President Vladimir Putin last week toured a hi-tech centre set up to monitor the virus situation and Russia's response.

Before the coronavirus pandemic, critics warned of the potential for excessive state surveillance reminiscent of the all-seeing "Big Brother" in George Orwell's novel "1984".

"The security argument is the one always used to justify loss of privacy and personal liberty.

That's where the greatest problem and the greatest danger lie," said French cybersecurity researcher Baptiste Robert.

Rights activist and lawyer Alyona Popova launched legal action against the use of facial recognition at an authorised opposition protest in September last year. She said cameras were attached to metal detectors that every participant had to pass through.

"The massive use of facial recognition technology amounts to state surveillance of its citizens and the state will certainly use it against political opponents," she said.



# 12 ECONOMY

<b>GOLD</b>	<b>RUPEE</b>	<b>OIL</b>	<b>SILVER</b>
₹41,705	₹75.94	\$26.15	₹38,100

Note: Spot gold markets shut due to lockdown in major states. \*Indian basket as on March 19, 2020

SENSEX: 26,674.03 ▲ 692.79 NIFTY: 7,801.05 ▲ 190.80 NIKKEI: 18,092.35 ▲ 1,204.57 HANG SENG: 22,663.49 ▲ 967.36 FTSE: 5,191.36d ▲ 197.47 DAX: 9,283.10 ▲ 541.95

\*International market data till 1900 IST

## 30-SHARE INDEX CLOSES AT 26,674

# Markets stage modest recovery: Sensex trims day's gains to end 693 pts higher

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, MARCH 24

STOCK MARKETS on Tuesday staged a modest recovery amid positive global cues and expectations of a stimulus package by the government and the Reserve Bank of India. However, indices came down from the day's high levels after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said an economic package was still underway even as she announced several compliance measures.

The Sensex, which rallied 1,480 points at one stage, came down later and closed with a gain of 693 points, or 2.67 per cent, at 26,674.03. The NSE Nifty50 rose by 190.80 points, or 2.51 per cent, at 7,801.05 despite the lockdown across the country. The rupee, too, gained 26 paise at 75.94 against the dollar.

Earlier, the investor sentiment got a boost after the US Federal Reserve on Monday rolled out several measures to support the US economy, including purchases of corporate bonds. On Monday, the BSE Sensex plummeted 3,935 points, or 13.15 per cent to 25,981.24 in the biggest daily crash in the his-

**EXPLAINED**  
**Fed move boosts sentiment**

INVESTOR SENTIMENT received a boost after the US Federal Reserve on Monday rolled out several measures to support the US economy, including purchases of corporate bonds.

tor of the capital market.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said, "Markets seemed to breathe a sigh of relief today after the crash yesterday, in sync with the global markets. In addition to the huge relief package by the US Fed yesterday, there were also expectations of a fiscal package by the government."

Analysts said market came off its highs after the Finance Minister made no significant announcement and the fact that the economic package was still in development. European and US manufacturing activity data due later, which may indicate

the impact of COVID-19 on economies, could influence markets tomorrow, they said.

"After a sharp decline in the previous session, the Indian markets witnessed healthy buying interest led by positive global cues and rising hopes of a stimulus package from the government. The Nifty index ended higher by 2.5 per cent," said Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Relligare Broking.

The broader markets underperformed with the BSE Midcap ending higher by 1.6 per cent whereas BSE Smallcap ended flat. On the sectoral front, except capital goods and realty, all the other indices ended with healthy gains. The IT index was the top performer gaining nearly 7 per cent followed by FMCG and Healthcare (up 2-3 per cent).

Though the announcement of relaxation of regulatory deadlines is definitely positive, markets are keenly awaiting a stimulus package from the government, analysts said. "Nonetheless, we believe the update on the spread of Coronavirus cases would be the single biggest factor dictating the market trend," said an analyst.

## Oil jumps 3% towards \$28, Wall Street up on hopes of \$2 tn stimulus

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON/LONDON, MAR 24

OIL JUMPED 3 per cent on Tuesday towards \$28 a barrel, supported by steps by the US Federal Reserve to bolster the economy and hopes the United States will soon reach a deal on a \$2 trillion coronavirus aid package.

The Fed on Monday rolled out an array of programmes including backing for the first time corporate bond purchases. US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin voiced confidence that a deal on the aid package would be reached soon.

"This is giving significant buoyancy to oil prices, at least in the short term," said Commerzbank analyst Eugen Weinberg.

"It is highly questionable whether the good mood will continue on the oil market, however," Brent crude was up 93 cents a

barrel, or 3.4 per cent, at \$27.96 by 1323 GMT. The global benchmark fell to \$24.52 on Wednesday, its lowest since 2003.

US West Texas Intermediate gained 97 cents, or 4.2 per cent, to \$24.33.

The expected stimulus pushed the US dollar lower against other currencies. A weaker dollar tends to support the price of oil and other dollar-denominated commodities. Wall Street jumped at the open on Tuesday as signs that Washington was nearing a deal on a \$2 trillion economic rescue package gave a shot of optimism to markets reeling under the biggest selloff since the global financial crisis.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1,130.26 points, or 6.08 per cent, at the open to 19,722.19. The S&P 500 opened higher by 107.04 points, or 4.78 per cent, at 2,344.44.

# Anatomy of a lockdown: Supply chains disrupted, automakers shut production, jobs at risk

PRANAV MUKUL & ANCHAL MAGAZINE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

THE LOCKDOWN across 30 states and Union Territories to prevent the spread of the coronavirus has brought economic activity to a virtual halt. Transportation and logistics system are struggling to get past checkpoints amid varying interpretations across state jurisdictions of what comprises essential services. The country's top manufacturing and services hubs are closing offices amid the restrictions. Construction activity across the major metropolitan regions is crimping to a stop.

While the lockdown started with 75 districts that make up about 10 per cent of the country's population, three-fourths of these figure in the list of 49 high-potential metropolitan clusters that consultancy firm McKinsey & Co has projected will account for about 75 per cent of India's incremental GDP between 2012 to 2025. The shutdown has since been expanded to 30 states and UTs.

As per the last available Sixth Economic Census, conducted during January 2013-April 2014, of 5.85 crore establishments with 13.13 crore workers in operation across 30 states and UTs, 10 states — Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Delhi, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan — accounted for 58.2 per cent of the total establishments classified by broad economic activity. Seven of these figure in the complete lockdown list.

No recent official data estimates the country's unorganised workers, which were according to the last NSSO Employment and Unemployment Survey, 2011-12 estimated to be 82.7 per cent or 39.14 crore of the total 47.41 crore

estimated employed persons. The contribution of the unorganised or informal sector to the economy, according to a National Statistical Commission report of 2012, varies between 48 per cent and 56.4 per cent, most of which have been badly impacted by the lockdown and there is a cascading impact on workers that have no safety net and little means to head back to their home states on account of the transportation blockade.

In the formal sector, the auto sector has been badly impacted. Passenger vehicle market leader Maruti Suzuki has temporarily shut operations at its production facilities in Haryana — Gurugram and Manesar — while utility vehicle maker M&M has announced the temporary suspension of manufacturing operations at its Nagpur, Chakan and Kandivali plants till March 31, 2020.

Hero MotoCorp has suspended production at all its facilities across the world and at its Global Parts Centre in Rajasthan with immediate effect till March 31, 2020. Tata Motors, too, has announced its rapidly scaling down activities at its Pune facility to skeletal operations and will be ready for plant closure by end of Tuesday and remain in this mode till March 31 and review it in due course.

The wave of shutdowns has now taken a pan-India hue. On March 22, Toyota Kirloskar Motor

temporarily shut down its production plant in Bidadi, Karnataka until further notice. Kia Motors India announced a day earlier that it will be temporarily shutting down all operations in Anantapur (Andhra Pradesh), Renault India announced the temporary suspension of all operations at its Alliance manufacturing facility in Chennai, Yamaha suspended its manufacturing operations at its plants in Chennai, Surajpur and Faridabad until March 31, 2020. TVS Motor Company has decided to halt all manufacturing operations at its plants in India and Indonesia till further notice while Suzuki Motorcycles India Pvt Ltd said it had suspended production at its Kherki Dhaura, Gurgaon plant in accordance with the directives issued by the Haryana Government. Hyundai Motor India too has suspended production at its Chennai plant with effect from March 23, 2020 till further notice while Honda Cars India has announced that it will be suspending production at its Greater Noida and Tapukara plants with effect from March 23, 2020.

India Ratings has noted that construction activities across construction hub cities such as Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Delhi, Pune, and Bengaluru are likely to be stalled or progress at a significantly slower-than-anticipated pace for a major portion of March 2020, and may continue in April as well.

In one of the measures announced for the organised sector after the lockdown, the central government has issued advisories to chief secretaries of all states and union territories, employers' associations and public enterprises, urging all public and private sector employers to not terminate any employment, casual or contractual, and not reduce wages.

## Crude oil, natural gas output fall 17% below target

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

INDIA'S CRUDE oil production fell 6.4 per cent and natural gas production fell 8.8 per cent in February this year compared to the year-ago period as state-owned ONGC and Oil India missed target output, official data showed on Tuesday.

According to data released by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, crude oil production in February 2020 stood at 2,399.51 thousand metric tonnes (TMT), which was 17 per cent lower than monthly target. Natural gas production stood at 2,340.5 million standard cubic metres (MMSCM) which was also 17 per cent lower than the monthly target.

## Labour Min directs states, UTs to use ₹52,000 cr of unutilised cess funds for construction workers

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

IN A directive to all states and union territories for the unorganised workers employed in the construction sector, the Union Labour and Employment Ministry has asked for the use of Rs 52,000 crore of unutilised cess collected under the Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Cess (BOCW) Act. The central government has asked states to devise schemes for transfer of these funds to the bank accounts of construction workers through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) route.

"...The country is dealing with a challenging situation due to the outbreak of COVID-19 which may lead to financial constraints, specifically to unorganised workers...un-

der section 60 of the Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Cess Act, 1996, the central government advises the state governments/UTs to frame a scheme under section 22(1)(h) of the Act for transfer of adequate funds in the bank accounts of the construction workers through direct benefit transfer mode," the letter dated March 24, by Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar to chief ministers of all states and Union Territories said. About 3.5 crore construction

workers are registered with the various construction welfare boards across the country. The amount to be disbursed will be decided by states, the letter said. Gangwar also said that it is "imperative that we devise probable mechanism to support out unorganised workers, who sustain their livelihood on daily wages" adding the financial assistance would "help to mitigate the financial crisis of our construction workers to some extent and boost their morale to deal with the epidemic."

The directive for the unorganised workers follows after the central government's advisories to chief secretaries of all states and UTs, employers' associations and public enterprises, urging all public and private sector employers to not terminate any employment, and not reduce wages.

## DoT writes to states again, asks them to ensure critical telecom services remain operational

AASHISHARYAN  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

DEPARTMENT OF Telecommunications (DoT) Secretary Anshu Prakash Tuesday wrote to the chief secretaries of states and administrators of Union Territories again to ensure essential telecom services in their states remain unaffected by the ongoing lockdown.

"Instances are being reported where the local authorities have asked the personnel of the telecom service providers at network operation centers and call centers to shut down operations in view of the restrictions. Hence it will be necessary that instructions reach the field level to permit personnel maintaining and providing telecom services to continue their work without interruption," Prakash said in his letter to the state chief secretaries and Union Territory administrators. *The Indian Express* has reviewed a copy of the letter.

The letter was preceded by another letter written by DoT advisor K Ramchand to the state and UT secretaries. Ramchand had, in his letter, suggested the states allow free movement of people working on key and critical telecom equipment and infrastructure.

Despite the letter from the DoT advisor, telcos had been facing problems on the ground as far as operations of critical telecom infrastructure was concerned. In some states, vehicles ferrying diesel for the generators lighting up the telecom towers were turned away by police personnel from checkpoints.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology also wrote to chief secretaries to allow IT and IT-enabled services to remain operational.

## Govt raises insolvency threshold to ₹1 cr to help small companies

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

FINANCE AND Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday announced an increase in the threshold for initiation of corporate insolvency from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1 crore to prevent small businesses from being dragged into insolvency, beside a number of other measures to ease the compliance burden on companies during the coronavirus outbreak.

Sitharaman also announced that the government may suspend initiation of insolvency proceedings against companies altogether for 6 months if the government finds that the situation does not improve by April 30. Sitharaman also announced a moratorium on mandatory filings with the Corporate Affairs Ministry's MCA-21 portal, removing additional fees for late filing during this period.

"We are raising the threshold of default to Rs 1 crore, so that we can prevent triggering of insolvency proceedings for MSMEs," said Sitharaman.

Experts welcomed the move stating that the increase in the threshold for initiation of insolvency proceedings would provide much needed protection of Medium, Small and Micro

**MORATORIUM FOR MANDATORY FILINGS**

■ The government may suspend initiation of insolvency proceedings against companies altogether for 6 months if the government finds that the situation does not improve by April 30

■ A moratorium has been announced for mandatory filings with the Corporate Affairs Ministry's MCA-21 portal, removing additional fees for late filing

Enterprises (MSMEs).

Sitharaman also announced the deferment of the implementation of the new auditing standard to FY21.

Sanjeev Singhal, partner at accounting firm SR Batliboi and Co, said the move would allow companies time to address immediate business needs and reduce the burden on companies and professionals in the current lockdown situation.

Singhal also said that industry and audit professionals were looking forward to accounting and auditing guidance from the ICAI on a number of issues "relating to physical verification of inventory, fixed assets, balance confirmations, fair value measurements, expected credit losses, going concern and impairment" in the current scenario.

Sitharaman also announced that companies would now have time till June 30 to create a deposit reserve of 20% of deposits set to ma-

ture in FY21 and to invest 15% of the value of debentures set to mature in the FY21 prescribed government instruments. Ordinarily companies have to meet these requirements by April 30.

Ankit Singhi, partner at Corporate Professionals, said the move was necessary as many companies did not have the funds to set up the reserve or make investments at this time and added that the government may have to extend the deadline or even remove the requirement for the fiscal if the current situation persists.

Sitharaman announced a 60 day relaxation in the rule requiring that board meetings be held once every 120 days for the next two quarters. Sitharaman also said that companies would also be exempt from the requirement under the Companies Act that at least one director be in residency in the country for at least 182 days in the year.

## FIGHTING COVID-19

### G7 pledges to 'do whatever is necessary'

Washington: G7 FMs and central bank chiefs Tuesday vowed to "do whatever is necessary" to safeguard jobs and economy. **AFP**

### Netflix, Facebook to reduce bitrate

New Delhi: Netflix and Facebook are reducing bit rates for videos on their platforms to help mitigate mobile and broadband network congestion. **PTI**

## Airlines offer credit shells for cancelled flights amid uncertainty over resumption

PRANAV MUKUL  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

WITH PRIME Minister Narendra Modi announcing a complete lockdown across India, air travel in the country has been prohibited for 21 days starting Wednesday. Earlier, the flight suspension was in place till March 31. The suspension of around 3,300 daily flights means thousands of cancelled tickets and passengers who are left wondering about whether they will be refunded the booking amount.

Experts believe when mass cancellations of this scale occur, it is difficult for airlines to provide refunds to passengers and while all airlines are offering free change of itinerary to their passengers,

IndiGo, GoAir and AirAsia India are offering credit shells to their passengers. This means the full amount of booking will be refunded albeit as a credit with the airline for reserving a ticket at a later date. This is a practice that is being followed by global airlines considering the uncertainty of operations returning to normalcy.

"I'm sure you'll agree that, at this point, it isn't an exaggeration to say that we are at war against the coronavirus and that it is a war we must win. The next few weeks are critical in this battle. With this in mind, IndiGo is in support of the government measures; to help in the elimination of COVID-2019, we are preparing an orderly suspension of flights from 00:00hrs on March 25, 2020 to 23:59hrs on March 31, 2020," IndiGo CEO

Ronojoy Dutta said in a mail to the airline's customers. The mail was sent prior to the PM's speech.

Airlines, on their part, are carefully measuring each step to come out of this precarious situation that is seeing them bleed cash. On one hand, the full-fledged grounding has come as a blessing in disguise for most airlines as their costs will be reduced during the period. On the other hand, for some airlines, it would be imperative they get relief from some of the stakeholders such as lessors, airports, government, etc. Meanwhile, global airlines have urged governments to speed up bailouts to rescue the air transport industry as they doubled their estimate of 2020 revenue losses from the coronavirus crisis to more than \$252 billion from \$113 billion pegged earlier.

## Tackling outbreak: One-time dispensation under MPLADS for medical facilities

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

THE GOVERNMENT has allowed a one-time dispensation under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) to allow Members of Parliament to recommend funds for purchase of medical testing and screening equipments for government hospitals and dispensaries and setting up of other related facilities in their respective constituencies.

In a circular dated March 24, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

amended the MPLADS guidelines to allow utilisation of MPLADS funds for infrared thermometers (non-contact), personal protection equipment (PPE) kits, thermal imaging scanners or cameras for railway stations, airports and other points of entry which allow detecting of temperature from a safe distance, corona testing kits approved by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, ICU ventilator and isolation/quarantine wards, face masks, gloves and sanitisers for medical personnel and any other medical equipment recommended by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for prevention, control and treatment of

COVID-19.

The district authority would purchase the required equipment in line with the guidelines of the Health Ministry, the circular said, adding that expenditure under this one-time dispensation will be restricted to the end of financial year 2020-21 and "no expenditure, under any circumstances, shall be allowed to made/roll over into next FY 2021-22".

Separately, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation also said that the National Statistical Office (NSO) has suspended field work of ongoing large-scale sample surveys across the country from March 18 to March 31.

## 'Facebook eyes multi-billion dollar stake in Reliance Jio'

REUTERS  
BENGALURU, MARCH 24

Facebook Inc is in talks to buy a multi-billion dollar stake in Reliance Industries Ltd's telecom unit, the Financial Times reported on Tuesday, citing two people with knowledge of the matter. The report the social media giant was in talks for a 10 per cent stake in Jio, controlled by India's wealthiest man Mukesh Ambani, but the talks were halted due to global travel bans amid the coronavirus outbreak.

## Asia to recover from 'economic tsunami' only next year: Moody's

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
MUMBAI, MARCH 24

WITH GLOBAL travel still largely shut down and global economy struggling to revive and suffering from lockdowns, the Asian economy will not get into full gear until next year, Moody's said.

Coronavirus has created a worldwide economic tsunami, it said. "The global economy is engulfed in a serious downturn. The virus has caused significant parts of the Asian and now European and US economies to all but shut down. More financial pain is coming as layoffs mount, businesses



Hong Kong International Airport, following the novel coronavirus disease outbreak on Tuesday. Reuters

curtail investment, and retirement nest eggs evaporate," Moody's said. It said central banks have responded aggressively but are running out of room to manoeuvre as interest rates hit zero lower bound.



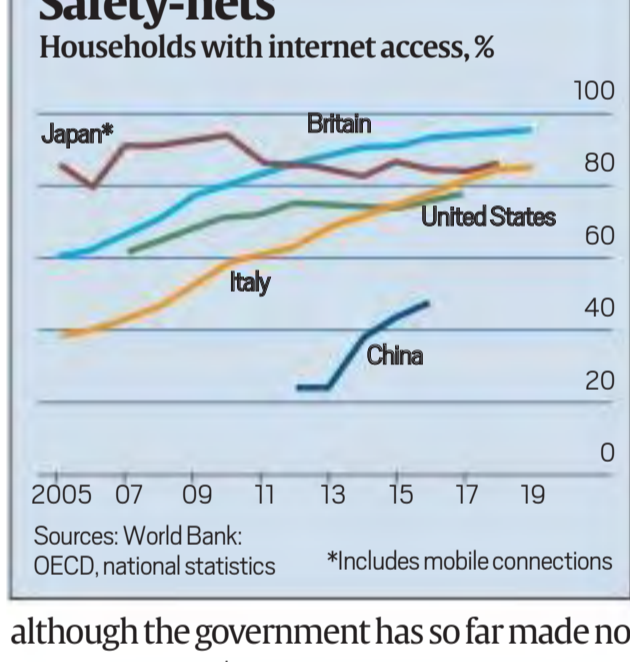
SCHOOL CLOSURES

# Mid-term break

How COVID-19 is interrupting children's education



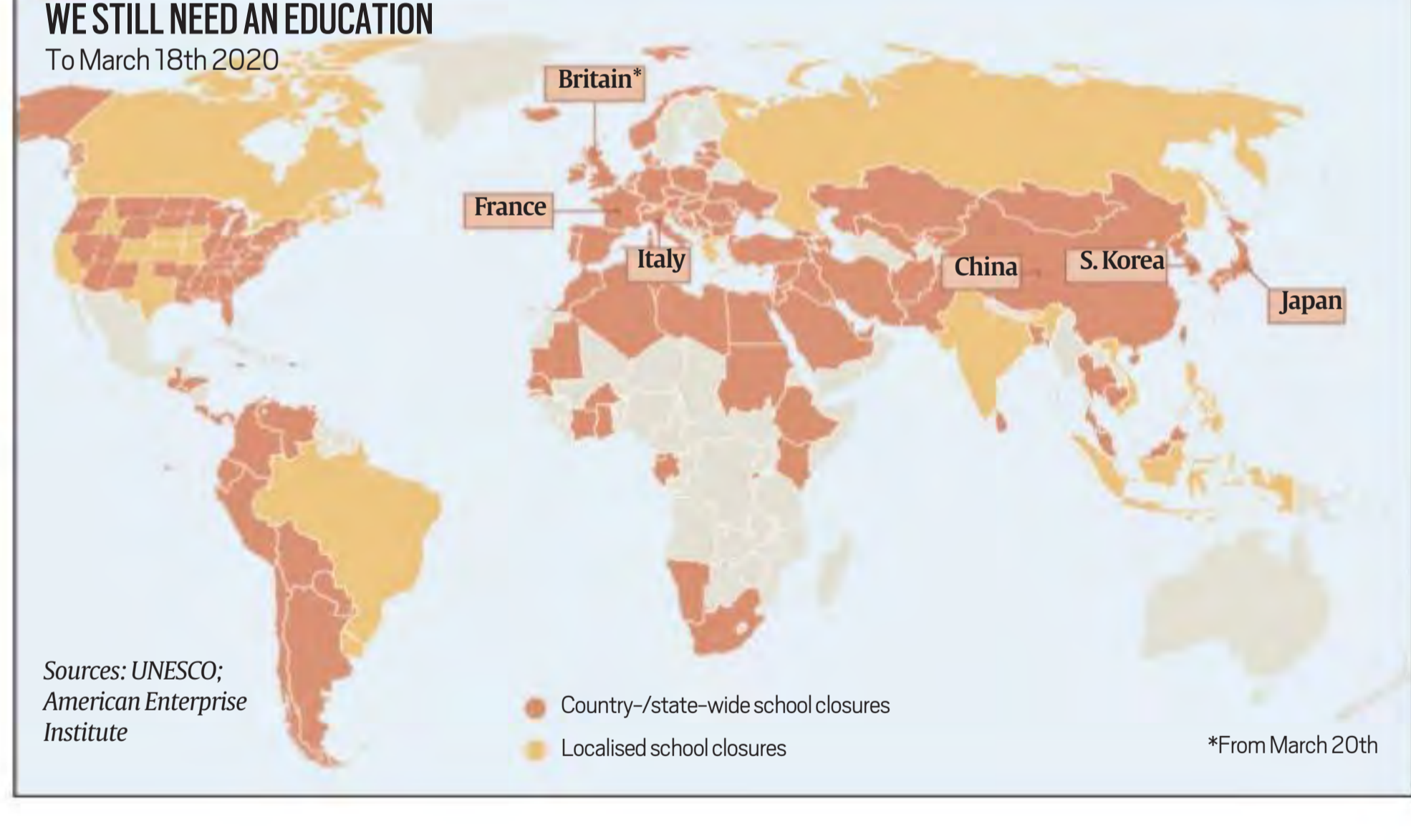
A student attends an online class at home as students' return to school has been delayed due to the coronavirus outbreak, in Anhui province, China, on March 2. Reuters



although the government has so far made no announcement.

Around 245,000 students in Britain were expecting in May and June to sit their A-levels, the exams that determine which university—if any—will grant them a place. On March 18th the government announced that those exams would be cancelled. Boris Johnson, the prime minister, said that the government would make sure that children still got "the qualifications they need and deserve for their academic career." That may go some way to assuaging fears that children whose parents lack the cash or knowledge to compensate for schools closing would be worst affected.

For American students the stakes are lower, in part because their transcript—based on their academic performance throughout the year—is the most important part of their university application, but also because they can take SATs, the exams used in college admissions, all year round. Most sit them in the



spring. For those hoping to start university in 2021, the March and May tests have been cancelled. They will be rescheduled, however, and students may be able to take them at home.

Nonetheless universities may have to be more accommodating. Covid-19 will "absolutely" affect the admissions procedure for Miami University in Ohio, says Bethany

Perkins, the director of admissions—particularly the deadlines. Students with offers from American universities have to choose which to accept by May 1st. But students worry that they will have to make an important decision without being able to visit any campuses. Along with their parents, some are calling for the date to be pushed back to

June 1st. Colleges have yet to react. Harvard says it is not changing its application process. The disruption has lent ammunition to those who disapprove of high-stakes exams, which some education theorists want to scrap. Some institutions have already made SATs optional. Others, including Miami University, were considering doing so. The

upheaval caused by covid-19 might accelerate that process, says Ms Perkins. But the flaws of other kinds of assessment may become clear in the coming months, bolstering those who believe that SATs and other high-stakes exams, which offer a relatively objective and transparent measure of ability, are the least unfair way to decide who gets into university.

The pandemic won't change this. But it will highlight the strengths and weaknesses of teaching online. Online resources are increasingly popular but few countries boast a developed digital infrastructure for all students. A survey by Teacher Tapp, an app, of over 6,000 teachers in Britain found that only 40% of those in state schools would be able to broadcast a video lesson, compared with 69% of teachers at independent schools. Elena Silva of New America, a think-tank, says that few American states have adequate kit for teaching online. "Most states are not that prepared. This is a moment of forced opportunity."

Teachers have little choice but to seize it. Since Italy closed its schools and universities on March 5th, teachers' forums have filled with discussions on the relative merits of Zoom, Moodle and virtual classrooms. Some teachers had been trained to use such technology, but many have faced a steep learning curve. Carla Crosato, a teacher in Treviso, in northern Italy, has been uploading videos in which she explains the novels of Italo Svevo and Luigi Pirandello to her students. "I never thought I'd become a YouTuber at 56," she says.

Even if teachers manage to broadcast their lessons, students may struggle to join them. Not everyone can get online (see chart). In America 7m school-age children cannot access the internet at home. Lin Kengying of 21st Century Education Research Institute, a think-tank in China, says that the closure of schools since the Lunar new year holiday, which began at the end of January, has led his organisation to reconsider the potential of e-learning. "It hasn't been smooth," he says, citing problems such as internet access, scheduling classes, teachers unfamiliar with online tuition, and subjects such as physical education being "awkward" to teach remotely. In China teachers have to submit lesson plans for review by censors, which has led to delays. Students have been spamming the main online teaching app with one-star reviews in an effort to get it removed from the app store. And Xue Hua, a mother of two in Jiangxi province, has been printing out all the learning materials for her 16-year-old son, Guo Guo, because she worries about too much screen-time.

Even done properly, online learning is a poor substitute for the kind that happens in a classroom. On average, students fare worse working online, especially those with less strong academic backgrounds, says Susanna Loeb of Brown University. Online courses can be an asset when students cannot be in school, but she reckons that they are "suboptimal for most" and argues that long periods of time spent away from actual schools will probably lead to children's education suffering.

Online learning has clear potential. Educational technology powered by artificial intelligence can help children in poor countries with iffy schools—supposing they have internet access. In 2018 researchers found that after four and a half months of using an Indian app called Mindspark, which tests basic language and maths skills, children made more progress in these areas than those in the control group. But the success of such initiatives relies on preparation and organisation, not sudden scrambles to teach existing curriculums to entire populations of students in the midst of a pandemic.

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FRANCE

# The virus and the vote

France suspends local elections because of COVID-19

AN EERIE silence descended on the French capital at noon on March 17th. In a city famed for its café culture and street life, policemen with megaphones were on patrol, checking papers and ordering those still out without permission to go back indoors. All residents nationwide were told to stay at home, unless they need to shop for food or medicine, attend medical appointments, or go to an essential job. Yet just two days earlier the same government had urged the French to vote in the first round of the municipal elections in the country's 35,000 cities, towns and villages.

As the country adjusts to the drastic new regime, questions are inevitably being asked. The week before confinement, mayoral candidates were still holding rallies, though with a cap of 1,000 people. On March 12th President Emmanuel Macron announced that the situation was worrying enough to close all schools and universities from March 16th. His prime minister, Edouard Philippe, introduced stage three on March 14th, shutting all cafés, restaurants, non-food shops, hairdressers, cinemas and sports centres. The

**As the country adjusts to the drastic new regime, questions are inevitably being asked. The week before confinement, mayoral candidates were still holding rallies, though with a cap of 1,000 people**

elections, they said, would go ahead.

There followed surreal scenes on voting day. Polling stations were organised to ensure that staff and voters remained at least a metre apart. Returning officers counted the vote wearing masks and gloves. Official results were declared, showing, broadly, a strong Green vote, backing for incumbent mayors, poor support for Mr Macron's party and a record low turnout. Yet, at the same time, Parisians were to be found gathered in parks or shopping in crowded street markets, ignoring advice to stay in. The next day,

Mr Macron addressed the nation again, deploring the fact that people were behaving "as if, basically, life had not changed". He suspended the second-round vote, due on March 22nd, shut France down, and declared, "We are at war."

Why did Mr Macron not delay the elections earlier? His former health minister now says she knew it was a "masquerade" to go ahead. It turns out that postponement was still on the table as late as March 12th. Delaying a democratic vote, however, was a decision that required cross-party consensus, at least politically. There was already a climate of suspicion at the government's recent use of a decree to pass its pension reform. Gérard Larcher, president of the Senate, opposed a postponement. Christian Jacob, the Republican leader (who has since contracted covid-19), had said publicly that a delay would constitute a coup d'état. Moreover, the scientific council advising the president suggested that voting would not pose a health hazard if sanitary rules were followed.

As France deals with an acceleration of cases, such questions will become second-



France's President Emmanuel Macron arrives at a European Union leaders summit in Brussels, Belgium, on March 22. Reuters

order. A military hospital is being mobilised in Alsace, one of the worst-affected regions. Fully 66% of the French told a poll that they found Mr Macron's first address, which mixed solemnity and science with much-

needed warmth, convincing. An astonishing 35m people, more than half the entire population, watched his second. And, despite disapproving of the decision to hold a first-round vote, 57% of the French think he and

his government are managing the crisis well—his highest approval rating for a very long time.

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14 TALK ART, MUSIC, STYLE, FOOD



INSPIRED AND HOW James Wan-directed Aquaman 2 is going to have hints of Silver Age DC comics that featured supervillain Black Manta. Aquaman 2 is scheduled for a December 2022 release.

SNAP SHOTS



Albert Uderzo Passes Away

FRENCH COMIC book artist Albert Uderzo, who illustrated the popular Asterix comic books, has passed away. The much loved comics, which featured the antics of two Gaulish warriors fighting against Roman occupation, have had a stellar fan following ever since they made their appearance in the Franco-Belgian magazine Pilote in 1959.



Sound Sense

AMAZON HAS cancelled the subscription service for its audio service, Audible, for children. Books and audio stories for juniors are now available for free, as long as schools are shut. Titles are available in six languages, and they can be streamed on all digital devices, through http://stories.audible.com/start-listen.

The Music is Not Over

From Berlin Philharmonic orchestra's virtual concert to artistes performing in their homes, musicians across the world are attempting to engage people through streaming platforms

SUANSHU KHURANA

ONSUNDAY, Germany barred more than two people from gathering at a place, except for families, as Chancellor Angela Merkel went into self-isolation. Her doctor had earlier tested positive for COVID-19. As the country went under lockdown to control the spike, Berlin Philharmonic sprang into action.

Now, the Philharmonic has opened its digital concert hall to the world in order to stay connected with its audience. "People have always found strength and hope in art and music during crises. By opening our digital concert hall, we hope to give people meaning and joy in life, particularly in these difficult times.



Sir Simon Rattle of the Berlin Philharmonic during a concert Berlin Philharmoniker; (below) TM Krishna

such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram to live-stream their performances.

Apart from the Berlin Philharmonic, the New York Metropolitan Opera is doing free streams, showing new operas each night at 7.30 pm. There's Carmen, La Bonhome and La Traviata, among others. Others who have followed suit include Vienna State Opera, which is now opening its archives through live streaming "so that music lovers all over the world will still be able to enjoy opera and ballet".

In India, at approximately 2.30 pm on Sunday, the first day of the lockdown, sitar player Shubhendra Rao and his wife, cellist Saskia Rao de Haas decided to enter our homes with raag Bhimpalasi, an apt afternoon raga, which is a unique combination of balmy,



People have always found strength and hope in music during crises. By opening our digital concert hall, we hope to give people meaning and joy in life, in these difficult times

ANDREA ZIETZSCHMANN GM, BERLIN PHILHARMONIC

sweet notes merged with melancholy. "Music heals like few other things can. In the present circumstances, it is important to introspect as well as spread positivity," says Rao, who, along with Saskia, set stage in their living room in Delhi's CR Park and performed a 60 minute-concert through live streaming.

There were no spotlights and the sound went away a couple of times. But when life is stranger than fiction, music can help. "My father (Ut Ali Akbar Khan) used to say that music is medicine and I couldn't agree more. Most of us are suffering right now either mentally, physically, or both, and I want to create a safe space on the internet which only asks you to quieten your mind and let this medicine in," wrote Alam Khan, US-based sarod player, a few days ago on his Facebook page.

CROSSWORD 4074



- ACROSS 1 Don't accept that it ought to be thrown away (6) 4 A very noisy bearing causes concern (6) 9 Italian who composed a quartet in valid style (7) 10 One's case may rest on them (5) 11 Strangely eager to come to terms (5) 12 A feeling no one book reflects (7) 13 A sharp blow? (7,4) 18 He rises perhaps, but she is expected to succeed (7) 20 Brief setback over eastern armistice (5) 22 Castles in the air (5) 23 It stops the listener (7) 24 Part of one's capital required for the church (6) 25 The better the article, the more he may pay for it (6)

Solutions Crossword 4073: Across: Refrain, 5 Aesop, 8 Private school, 9 Lehar, 10 Elastic, 11 Storms, 12 Artist, 15 Affront, 17 Night, 19 Man of few words, 20 Royal, 21 Silence. Down: 1 Repeal, 2 Flight of fancy, 3 Anagram, 4 Nieces, 5 Accra, 6 Smoothing iron, 7 Polecat, 11 Stammer, 13 Renewal, 14 Stress, 16 Offal, 18 Taste.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



DAY TODAY BY PETER VIDAL

- ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20) Personal involvements which once seemed so necessary and fundamental to your existence may no longer provide you with the stability you desire. It looks as if from now on you will be thrown back on your own resources even more than you ever were in the past. LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23) Recent planetary influences have been stimulating, there's no doubt about that. However, the consequences may have been costly, and you're left to pick up the pieces. Do so with your usual skill. I know it's tiring to have to cope with other people's mess, but that's what you're good at. TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21) Your main concern must be to establish stronger ties with energetic people, especially those younger or less experienced than you. You have sufficient wisdom to see yourself as a teacher in the broadest sense of the word, passing on your wisdom to people who have never come close to the events you have encountered. GEMINI (May 22 - June 21) There is almost certain to be a major confrontation over career matters, but the saddest part of the whole sorry incident may be that someone you trusted appears to have let you down. Forgive and forget would seem to be the best answer. It's certainly the most noble way out of a current impasse. CANCER (June 22 - July 23) The fact that other people may be behaving badly doesn't give you the excuse to do the same. You have a reputation to maintain and, to this end, you may keep silent when, all around you, people are discrediting themselves. Your discretion will reflect well on you. LEO (July 24 - Aug 23) It is time to cut away dead wood and avoid any suspicion that you are hanging on to attitudes or behaviour patterns that have been brought into disrepute. Bear in mind that this is a generally positive phase. Also remember that good fortune is what you make it. AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19) Seldom have you experienced a like period when partners or colleagues can offer you such help and assistance. Take heart from the fact that adverse influences are now waning and the prospect that people will once again appreciate your rare, even unique human gifts, is growing. PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20) You may be going off on one of your typical flights of fancy. What is required now is detailed and thorough homework, otherwise you may risk isolating yourself. You need friendly company and support from people who understand what you're feeling without having to be told.

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 clue.

LTAAEE BOURNS SPAHI EOYCDM

Difficulty Levels 2 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

SUDOKU 4159

SOLUTION SUDOKU 4158





"Sport is not the most important thing right now, preserving human life is. This Olympic flame will be the light at the end of this tunnel."

THOMAS BACH,  
INTERNATIONAL OLYMPICS COMMITTEE PRESIDENT

TOKYO 2020 TOKYO 2021

# Five-year wait

While disappointment is the overriding emotion, Indian athletes believe Olympic postponement is the right decision

## A chock-a-block calendar on the cards next year

REUTERS  
MARCH 24

THE DECISION to postpone the 2020 Tokyo Olympics by a year is set to further disrupt the global sporting calendar, which has already been wrecked by the coronavirus pandemic, making for a very crowded schedule next year. After weeks of speculation and mounting criticism at the delay in announcing a postponement, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and IOC president Thomas Bach agreed the event would be rescheduled for the summer of 2021 at the latest.

Swimming's 2021 World Aquatics Championships set for July 16-Aug. 1 in Fukuoka in southern Japan look set to be the first casualty of that move. "We will now work closely with the host organising committee of the 2021 FINA World Championships in Fukuoka, with the Japan Swimming Federation and with the Japanese public authorities, in order to determine flexibility around the dates of the competition, if necessary and in agreement with the IOC," world swimming body FINA said.

The 2021 World Athletics Championships are also certain to be postponed after organisers said they would shift the event to accommodate the rescheduled Olympics. The championships were due to be held in the US state of Oregon from Aug. 6 to Aug. 15.

Two major soccer events due this year had already been moved to next year before the Games' announcement, with decisions last week to delay the European Championship and CONMEBOL's Copa America by a year.

The two continental competitions will each now start on June 11 and end on July 11. Both decisions led to FIFA's rebooted Club World Cup being indefinitely postponed, while the 2021 women's European Championship in England will also be moved to an as yet unconfirmed date as it clashes with the rescheduled men's tournament, which is going ahead across 12 nations.

The postponement of the Olympics, which features men and women's soccer, means the women's Euros cannot be moved to August and makes it more likely that the event will be played in the summer of 2022. It could also affect the 2021 UEFA Nations League and CONCACAF's Gold Cup.

Other 2021 events featuring Olympic-bound athletes that will be affected by the Tokyo Games postponement include the world boxing championships in New Delhi, the Euro Hockey nations championship in the Netherlands in August, and the European basketball championship in September.

The first postponement in the Olympic Games' 124-year modern history could also have a knock-on effect on competitions where there will be no clash of schedules for athletes.

The Olympics is particularly valuable to broadcasters due to its unique place in the calendar, but the 2021 Games is now on a collision course with events such as rugby's British Lions' tour of South Africa in July and August.

Players in men's and women's rugby will also be affected by the Games' postponement as some may be participating in the Rugby Sevens in Tokyo. The women's rugby World Cup begins in New Zealand on Sept. 18.

**Two major football events due this year had already been moved to next year before the Games' announcement, with decisions last week to delay the European Championship and CONMEBOL's Copa America by a year.**

## Olympics in Japan has broken the Games cycle before, in 1940 it was war

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE  
TOKYO, MARCH 24

THE DECISION to postpone the 2020 Olympics over the coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented, but in some ways Japan has been here before - the cancelled summer Games of 1940 were also due to be hosted in Tokyo. Japan's military aggression in Asia forced the annulment of what became known as the "Missing Olympics" after the Games were switched to Helsinki before finally being scrapped because of World War II.

Tokyo officials originally touted a bid for the 1940 Games as a way to show the city had recovered from the devastating 1923 earthquake, according to author David Goldblatt in his history of the Olympics entitled "The Games".

In much the same way, Japan framed the 2020 Olympics as the "Recovery Games" - a chance to show the country is back on its feet after the catastrophic 2011 triple disaster of earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown. Tokyo's 1940 bid was spearheaded by Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo and first Japanese member of the International Olympic Committee, who stressed the importance of bringing the Games to Asia for the first time.

"I carry a grave resolve. The Olympics should naturally come to Japan. If they don't, the reason for this must be something unjust," said Kano in his plea to the IOC.

The Japanese had a special reason for wanting to celebrate 1940, as it coincided with the 2,600th year since the enthronement of the nation's legendary first emperor, Jimmu. Tokyo launched an official bid in 1932

MIHIR VASAVDA  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

VINESH PHOGAT maintains a diary, which she updates every night. In it are her uncensored, unfiltered emotions; a glimpse into the person behind the athlete. Each entry, though, is centred around just one thing - the Olympics.

"I have noted everything in the diary - thoughts on my wrestling, my weekly planning, sleeping patterns, dreams, ambitions... I was in the zone," the wrestler says.

Then, on Tuesday, when she was stretching after finishing her training, her physio broke the news to her: Tokyo 2020 would now be Tokyo 2021. "I didn't even finish my stretching, *Khalipan sa ho gaya* (there is a feeling of emptiness)."

Her sentiments, upon learning the news, went from emptiness to disappointment to anger. "Usually, when I feel like this, I go shopping or just out somewhere."

But even that would not be possible now, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi declaring a 21-day nationwide lockdown. "Everything is happening today," Vinesh laughs.

Four years ago Vinesh had to be stretched off after dislocating her knee during her quarterfinal bout (48kg) against China's Sun Yanan at the Rio Olympics. Her quest to prove herself at the pinnacle of the sport only got longer.

On Tuesday, after consulting the organising committee and the Japanese government, the International Olympic Council (IOC) decided to postpone the Olympics, which were to start in four months' time. A new date hasn't been announced yet, but the IOC said in a statement that the Games will be "rescheduled to a date beyond 2020 but not later than summer 2021."

Vinesh says she was hoping against hope that the situation would turn around just in time for the Olympics to take place as originally scheduled, from July 24 to August 9. It was always going to be a challenge, though, especially after the other major event of the summer, the European football championship, were deferred by a year.

The IOC was hoping to wait till April and then take a call. But with 43 per cent of athletes still to qualify, and normalcy nowhere in sight globally, many argued that going ahead with the Olympics would risk athletes' health and also dilute the playing field.

"In that sense, the decision is understandable and a fair one too. I have been able to train because there is a facility in my house. But there are so many who aren't able to do it, athletes from India as well as other countries," Vinesh, who qualified for the Games after finishing on the podium at last year's World Championships, says. "And think of those who have not qualified yet! They must be under so much stress. So, it is good that they will get enough time to start training again."

India have been aiming for a double-digit medal tally in Tokyo. Seventy-three athletes have qualified till date and several more were expected to seal their berths in the coming months but all qualification tournaments had been called off in the aftermath of the pandemic. The process is likely to resume once the situation gets normal across the world.

But even for those who have qualified, the preparation would have been far from ideal if the Olympics had gone ahead.

Vinesh has been training in Haryana while her personal coach Woller Akos is in Hungary. Fellow wrestler Bajrang Punia has been locked inside his apartment in Sonapat, unable to do anything more than sit-ups and stretching. Javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra has

**Vinesh says she was hoping against hope that the situation would turn around just in time for the Olympics to take place as originally scheduled, from July 24 to August 9.**

been in self-isolation after returning from Turkey last week. "I still have a week's time left for my quarantine period to end. I have been working out in my room and playing a lot of games on my phone," he says.

**Not a shock: Chopra**

Chopra had been away from the field for more than a year owing to an injury and qualified for the Olympics in his first tournament on his return earlier this year. He remains one of India's biggest medal prospects at the Games but believes the decision to postpone was the right one. "We should not even be talking about sports at the moment. Health is the top priority and I completely support the postponement. We athletes knew it was inevitable and that's why it is not a shock."

Chopra's views were echoed by boxers. The last two months have been a series of lucky breaks for the boxers. The contingent was scheduled to take part in the Olympic qualifiers, initially scheduled for February 3-14, in Wuhan, China - Ground Zero for the pandemic, so to speak.

The tournament was then postponed and shifted to Jordan, en route which the Indians trained in Italy, and left in the nick of time. A record nine boxers secured Olympic berths at the Asian qualifiers which concluded on March 11.

And within hours, the Americas qualifiers were called off and the European event followed suit after three days of action.

"The magnitude and the seriousness just kept increasing for us," says pugilist Lovlina Borgohain. "The Wuhan tournament cancellation was the first shock. We realised 'okay, this is getting serious'. When we were in Italy, there were only 1-2 cases. I never imagined that Italy would soon be in such rough shape. Reading reports of other qualifiers being cancelled was the first time I thought the Olympics could be in danger."

Lovlina says the fact that Japan kept saying that the Olympics won't be postponed was "scary". "Living under lockdown, it becomes clear that this is a life-or-death scenario. Olympics would have been dangerous," she says from her residence in Golaghat, Assam.

Vikas Krishan, who was hoping to focus on professional boxing after the Olympics, says the delay will give him enough time to pursue that. But for others, who had planned to retire or pursue other goals, things may have got a little complicated.

Indian Olympic Association (IOA) secretary-general Rajeev Mehta accepts a one-year postponement 'might impact the career/qualification and plans of some athletes' but said they will address those concerns in the coming months.

The plan, for now, is to stay indoors. Late on Tuesday, the Sports Authority of India ordered suspension of all Olympics-related camps, advised all athletes to maintain 'social distancing' and not even indulge in gym sessions. For some athletes, like Vinesh, it means a little more time to get over the initial disappointment of the postponement.

Asker what her diary entry for Tuesday, March 24, will be, and she says: "I don't know. I won't leave it blank for sure. The story hasn't ended yet."



At the 2016 Rio Games, wrestler Vinesh Phogat hobbled out in the quarterfinals with a dislocated knee. File

## We were peaking, spirits were high



SUMA SHIRUR

I AM a little disappointed because we've worked hard for this in these last two years. Everyone was ready and raring to go. This was a very well prepared team, people were peaking, spirits were high and we knew that we had good chances of winning medals.

But at the same time, the Olympics getting postponed was bound to happen. Everything depended on the coronavirus and how things would shape up with it spreading. This was the right thing to do. Some countries are more hit than the others, so their athletes can't train. And even our athletes won't be able to train as well because some of them have ranges at home, some do not. Considering the lockdown all over the world, this was inevitable.

We were in New Delhi for a training camp for the World Cup, then the World Cup got

cancelled, then we had Olympic trials, immediately after that there was the lockdown. Everything happened so soon that (coaches) didn't have any time to prepare the athletes for this. All of them are home. I hope they all use this time for a good emotional recovery. It's been a very tough year and a half.

This was anyway a time we had planned for everyone to get some time off before the Olympic grind. So it's a good way to use this down time to emotionally recover and then slowly, as the dates finalise, we should work our way to getting back. Until then, some training and exercise at home should help keep them in shape. Maybe not at the level that they should be, but for now it should be alright.

They're all very young athletes. Suddenly when the goal is, not gone, but the urgency is lost, I'm sure they will all slack off a bit. But we know the formula, we can prepare them again in time for whenever the Games will be held.

I'm not at all worried about whether we can peak again. The only thing is how we can cope as a country with the outbreak of the virus. I hope we all practice social distancing, that's the need of the hour. Hopefully, things will get back to normal as early as it can because that is the only way the team can start

preparing again for the Olympics whenever it is scheduled. We have to go ahead with a different plan now. I'm sure the new schedule will give athletes ample time to prepare, and I'm sure our athletes will also be able to peak by then.

Right now we all are in this lockdown state and we will have to wait and see how things unfold. But we will probably have to find a solution, even if it is that maybe the Olympic-bound athletes can train in isolation at a range. We have to make sure the Olympic athletes don't have too long a gap in training, because it's important to stay in touch. A range which is not open for others, where the Olympic-bound athletes can at least practice the basics, at the same time continue social distancing, that might be an option.

There's been so much uncertainty earlier, but now we know the Olympics are postponed. Hopefully, things will get better and we will get some concrete plans from the IOC, and of course, clearance from the WHO. Then we can get our athletes to start working towards the Olympics again.

(Shirur is an Asian Games and CWG medalist. She is also the junior national rifle coach. She spoke to Shahid Judge)



A man wearing a Japanese flag-themed hat shows a towel with a Tokyo 2020 logo while waiting in line to view the Olympic Flame in Fukushima City. File

and found themselves up against Rome and Helsinki. Japan engaged in a fierce lobbying campaign that included pleading with Italy's fascist dictator Benito Mussolini to step aside in their favour.

"In the you-scratch-my-back kind of deal that has become the norm in international sports politics, Mussolini announced with unusual candour, 'We will waive our claim for 1940 in favour of Japan if Japan will support Italy's effort to get the XIIIth Olympiad for Rome in 1944,'" wrote Goldblatt.

With just Tokyo and Helsinki left standing, the IOC plumped for the Japanese capital by 37 votes to 26.

Before the bid had been tabled, Japan in 1931 invaded the Chinese province of Manchuria and two years later withdrew from the League of Nations - the precursor to the United Nations - after it refused to sanction the occupation.

The Olympic bid was therefore also an attempt to shore up international support, according to Asato Ikeda, assistant professor at Fordham University, New York, who has written about the 1940 Games.

Japan's bid was "part of its international cultural diplomacy in order to ameliorate the relationship with the Western democratic nations, especially Britain and the United

States", Ikeda wrote in an essay in the Asia-Pacific Journal. As preparations for the Games gathered pace, a schedule was drawn up and posters were printed. The opening ceremony was set for September 21, 1940. There were some hiccups though, including questions about whether the Emperor could declare the Games open, as the Japanese then held him to be semi-divine and therefore unable to be seen and heard by ordinary citizens.

As diplomatic pressure grew on Japan from outside, there was increasing clamour inside the country for cash to be diverted for military purposes. Japanese diplomats at the time voiced concern in cables back to Tokyo that powers such as Britain and the United States could boycott the Games over Japan's war-like activity. Yet, in words familiar to those following the story of the 2020 Games, Tokyo insisted the show would go on.

Barker cites a cable from Tokyo City Hall to the IOC which said: "The citizens of Tokyo are doing their utmost to make the 1940 Games a success."

But the Japanese Olympic Committee eventually bowed to the inevitable and forfeited in July 1938, saying what they euphemistically called "the trouble with China" had made staging the Games impossible.

"The organising committee and the people of Japan were deeply disappointed in having to give up the Games, but, in the circumstances, no other course was open," the Olympic News bulletin published in Tokyo wrote at the time. "With the worsening international relations and increasing military activities in the Asian continent, the cancellation might not have been that surprising," Ikeda told AFP.

## Conflict and the Games

While the Games have gone ahead despite political boycotts and terrorism, global conflicts in 1916 and 1944 resulted in the cancellation of the Olympics.

**BERLIN 1916**

At the IOC meeting in Stockholm in July 4, 1912, the sixth Olympic Games were awarded to Berlin, with the German capital beating out competition from Alexandria, Amsterdam, Brussels, Budapest and the US city of Cleveland. Germany pulled out all the stops, opening a stadium with a capacity of around 33,000 in western Berlin's leafy Grunewald district in 1913 to celebrate 25 years of Kaiser Wilhelm II's reign as head of the German Reich. The stadium took only 200 days to build, according to the German Olympic Committee (DOSB) and featured a 100-metre-long swimming pool on its northern side.

The sporting programme was to feature athletics, wrestling, fencing, shooting, modern pentathlon, cycling, gymnastics, swimming, rowing, hockey and golf. For the first time, women were invited to participate in swimming, diving, tennis and netball, the DOSB said in its history of the 1916 Games.

A two-day test event was held on

June 27 and 28, 1914 in the Berlin stadium. On the second day, Archduke Frank Ferdinand of Austria and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo, starting a chain of events that would result in the outbreak of World War I.

**LONDON 1944**

Despite what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called the "gathering storm" over Europe due to Nazi Germany, the IOC met in London in July 1939 to decide which city would host the 1944 Olympics. They plumped for London, which beat bids by Rome, Detroit, Lausanne and Athens. But only three months later, Britain had declared war on Germany and the 1944 Games was a non-starter. The winter Games were due to be held in Cortina d'Ampezzo in Italy but these were also scrapped. Just three years after the war ended, and with the world began gradually getting back onto its feet, London hosted what became known as the "Austerity Games" in 1948. Neither Germany nor Japan were invited to participate.



SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

# What could an Olympics postponement cost Japan?

The historic decision is likely to pile on the pain for country's economy, already expected to be roiled by the global virus outbreak, economists say.

## What has the Games cost Japan?

At the end of 2019, organisers estimated the total cost of the Games at around 1.35 trillion yen (\$12.6 billion).

That is divided between the city of Tokyo, which is paying 597 billion yen, the Japanese organising committee, which contributes 603 billion yen and the central government, which is paying 150 billion yen.

But the actual costs for the country have been hotly debated, with a widely publicised audit report estimating national government spending from the bid in 2013 until 2018 at 1.06 trillion yen, nearly 10 times the budget.

Japanese businesses have also poured money into the event in sponsorships, paying out a record 348 billion yen (\$3.3 billion).

And that figure doesn't include the partnerships signed between major companies and the International Olympic Committee for rights to sponsor several Games. Among those are giants including Japan's Toyota, Bridgestone and Panasonic.

Toshiro Muto, CEO of Tokyo 2020, asked about how much delaying the games will cost Japan, said: "The basic policy of postponement was decided today. How exactly are we going to achieve the postponement? That will be discussed among the IOC, us and Tokyo. I am sure it will be very difficult."

## Which sectors would be affected?

According to analysts at Capital Economics, one key factor to consider in terms of how a postponement might hit Japan's economy is that most of the spending has already happened.

That means the effects of outlays, most notably on construction of new sporting venues, has already been factored into GDP in recent years.

But a postponement could drag down tourism as well as general consumption in the country, already under pressure after a controversial sales tax hike last year.

Tourism in Japan was already struggling before the coronavirus pandemic, amid a diplomatic spat with South Korea that prompted boycott calls. Visitors from South Korea previously made up the second largest contingent of tourists to Japan, behind only China.

And with the virus outbreak, Japan

has seen a further fall in South Korean numbers, as well as a plunge in travellers from China, which together accounted for nearly half the 31.9 million foreign visitors to the country in 2019.

In February, the number of foreign visitors to Japan fell 58.3 percent compared to a year early, with a plunge of 87.9 percent in tourists coming from China, official figures show.

Japan has an industrialised and diversified economy not heavily reliant on tourism, with foreign visitor expenditures making up just 0.9 percent of GDP in 2018, according to economic research organisation CEIC.

But with domestic spending already weak, the hit from a postponement could ripple through the economy and further depress local purchasing.

## What would the impact on GDP be?

The coronavirus pandemic has already helped push Japan towards a recession, with GDP contracting 1.8 percent in the October-December quarter. Economists at research firm Fitch on Monday revised its 2020 growth forecast for Japan to -1.1 percent from -0.2 percent, reflecting the risks to consumption, tourism and exports posed by the pandemic.

But it said that a postponement of the Games could worsen the situation significantly, and "could impact GDP between 0.5 and 0.8 percentage point to our forecast." A postponement "would badly affect Japanese consumer confidence" Takashi Miwa, an economist at Nomura, told AFP.

It is also unclear what effect it might have on the 240 billion yen (\$2.28 billion) in spending from foreign spectators expected to attend the Games.

The Tokyo 2020 organisers decline to say how many foreign visitors they expect to visit Japan specifically to watch the sporting action.

So far 4.5 million tickets have been sold in Japan, with around 7.8 million expected to be sold overall, 20 to 30 percent of them internationally.

How the postponement will affect those tickets is not yet clear.

Economists at SMBC Nikko Securities said Tuesday that postponing the Games would reduce the country's GDP this year by some \$6 billion. But, they added, the same amount would be gained when the Games are eventually held, effectively cancelling out the losses.

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE



## FIELD OF HOPE

Workers assemble a temporary field hospital at the Pacaembu Stadium in Sao Paulo to handle cases from the coronavirus outbreak. Reuters

■ The 45,000-seat Pacaembu Stadium, which will be turned into an open-air hospital is expected to house more than 200 beds for minor cases of COVID-19. It should be ready in 10 days.

■ The stadium is near several key hospitals in Brazil's biggest metropolis, which is the local epicenter of the disease. As of Monday afternoon, Brazil had more than 1,600 confirmed cases, and 25 deaths.

■ Almost all arenas used in the 2014 World Cup were also offered by clubs as open-air hospitals and health care units. All professional football in Brazil is halted.

■ Two days after reconstruction began, wires and cables were all over the pitch, and the first metallic structures were up in the stadium inaugurated in 1940 and used in the 1950 World Cup.

# Pipe dream

Even as the world disagreed, IOC insisted that the Games would offer hope in times of corona pandemic

MATTHEW FUTTERMAN  
MARCH 24

FOR WEEKS, as the coronavirus spread across the world, Thomas Bach, the president of the International Olympic Committee, held on to the dream that opening an Olympic Games on July 24 in Tokyo could serve as a celebration of triumph over a pandemic that has killed thousands of people, closed down countries and devastated the world economy.

By Monday, it appeared that a decision on whether to postpone the Games had become a matter of when and how, rather than if, and on Tuesday night in Tokyo, the deed was finally done. After a phone call with Bach, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan said that he had proposed a one-year postponement and that Bach had agreed "100 percent."

The I.O.C.'s slog to a decision that so many saw as inevitable for weeks and its slow public responses to the coronavirus were the latest examples that the organization often seems out of step with much of the world.

For more than a century, this group, which has always included a healthy representation of royal families and society's wealthy upper crust, has held on to the idea that the Olympics are about values. That the Games are a symbol of peace that is larger than any sports competition. That the power of the Olympic flame and the Olympic rings can unify and repair the world, even in the face of brutal dictatorships and virulent disease.

The I.O.C. took the 1936 Olympics to Berlin as Hitler's fascist, anti-Semitic regime was in full bloom. The I.O.C. cozied up to Vladimir V.



IOC president Thomas Bach said late last week that all might be well with the world in as little as four months.

Putin, the Russian president, and said little ahead of the Sochi Olympics in 2014 when Russia passed laws prohibiting displays of homosexuality or when it invaded neighboring Ukraine as the Games were still happening.

As it encountered each problem, the I.O.C. held that the Olympic value of hope would serve as a unifying counterweight to the world's travails.

The disconnect became apparent again in recent days, as cases of the disease Covid-19 spread across Italy, Spain, Britain, the United States and many other countries. Bach insisted late last week that all might be well with the world in as little as four months, long after thousands of athletes, dozens of medical ex-

perts and sports officials across the globe had concluded that the Tokyo Olympics, as planned, would be impossible to pull off.

Harvey Schiller, a former executive director of the United States Olympic Committee, said Bach and the I.O.C. were probably too busy juggling the needs of broadcasters, sponsors and officials in Japan, which has spent some \$12 billion on the Games, to listen to people like athletes, many of whom can no longer train because of restrictions related to the pandemic. "There's an old saying, that the revolution only tells you about something that already took place," Schiller said Monday. "Everyone knows there is no way the Games are going to go on this summer."

As Bach announced a four-week deadline for a decision and began to work through the countless adjustments that the shift will require, another Olympic leader was developing a more emphatic take on the situation.

David Shoemaker, the chief executive of the Canadian Olympic Committee, spent Sunday talking to athletes, coaches and others, then sent a letter to Bach explaining why Canada would not send a team to the Olympics if they were somehow held as scheduled.

"What we think had been getting lost was that all the focus to this point has been on whether the World Health Organization and the I.O.C. and the local organizers think it will be safe four months from now" in Tokyo, Shoemaker said in an interview on Monday.

Shoemaker said the better question was whether it was safe now for athletes to train for competition.

"For us the answer was no, and we felt we had to tell Team Canada to stand down and

take the pressure off and to focus on the public health crisis," he said.

Until Monday night, the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee had resisted getting publicly ahead of the I.O.C. Then it released results of a survey of 1,780 athletes, in which 68 percent said they did not believe the Games could fairly take place as planned.

"It's more clear than ever that the path toward postponement is the most promising, and we encourage the I.O.C. to take all needed steps to ensure the Games can be conducted under safe and fair conditions for all competitors," the committee said in a statement from Sarah Hirschland, its chief executive, and Susanne Lyons, its board chair.

In an interview on Monday afternoon, Lyons said she understood the frustration of American athletes who wanted a harder and earlier push toward postponement. She said she had been advocating on their behalf behind the scenes.

"I don't need to make a headline to communicate with Thomas Bach," Lyons said. "I have his cellphone number."

Lyons also said the size of the United States and its investment in the Olympics made it more difficult for her and the U.S.O.P.C. to take public stands on issues without coming across as a bully. She said the organization could have a "disproportionate impact," which means it has a larger responsibility to speak only when it is completely informed.

"When the others have something to say, it is of course important, but when we say something it almost forces the hand," Lyons said. "We are listened to in a different way."

NEW YORK TIMES



Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe addresses the media on Tuesday. Reuters

## THE GAME MUST GO ON

# Live-tweeting a game that wasn't: How football media keeps fans occupied

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE  
LONDON, MARCH 24

FROM IMPASSIONED debates around the kitchen table to detailed reports about matches that never happened, Europe's football media are working overtime to give fans a welcome distraction during the coronavirus crisis.

Former Tottenham, Barcelona and England striker Gary Lineker, a keen amateur chef, even opened up his home in a bid to satisfy the British football public's appetite for sports talk. As the presenter of long-running English top-flight highlights show Match of the Day, Lineker, ignoring social distancing guidelines, played host to regular studio guests Alan Shearer and Ian Wright around his kitchen table last week.

Match of the Day was screened as a panel show rather than highlights on Saturday, with Lineker, Shearer and Wright debating the greatest captains of the Premier League era. For once there was no talk of VAR as ex-Newcastle and Blackburn

star Shearer detailed his memorable battles with Manchester United's Roy Keane and former Arsenal striker Wright described his use of "Franglais" to make conversation with team-mate Patrick Vieira.

In what was due to be FA Cup quarter-final weekend, the BBC also filled the void of what would have been live games with classic last eight matches from the competition's past. Lineker, 59, has since gone into self-isolation after his 28-year-old son George told him he may have contracted the virus.

In Italy, one of the countries worst hit by the pandemic, the football media have been focused on boosting national pride. Sky Sports have already broadcast Italy's matches on their way to victory in the 2006 World Cup. The schedule for Monday was "a whole day spend together with Italian coaches who have left their mark in England".

There were segments on Claudio Ranieri, who masterminded Leicester's fairytale Premier League title triumph, Roberto Mancini, who won the title at Manchester City, and Carlo Ancelotti, a

double winner at Chelsea.

In Spain, La Liga club Leganes live tweeted their game that wasn't against Valladolid and newspaper AS did a match report on it, while Cadena Ser also broadcast commentary of the "goal".

Manolo Lama from Cadena Copa, Miguel Angel Roman from Movistar and Antoni Daimiel from Cadena Ser — three of Spain's most famous commentators — all commented on La Liga's playstation tournament over the weekend, which was won by Real Madrid's Marco Asensio and drew over 170,000 online fans while raising money for charity.

## Nostalgic highlights

Much of the weekend's French sports coverage was given over to the big clash between Marseille and Paris Saint-Germain, which was meant to be played on Sunday. Sunday morning's edition of leading sports daily L'Equipe had a front-page photo montage of current PSG defender Marquinhos giving chase to Chris Waddle in a Marseille shirt.

Inside, the paper pitched together a

dream team for each side (Marseille with Waddle, Didier Deschamps, Didier Drogba and Jean-Pierre Papin et al, versus PSG with Rai, Ronaldinho, Zlatan Ibrahimovic and George Weah among others).

Nostalgia has been a recurring theme and on Sunday night Canal Plus filled the slot that should have been dedicated to live coverage of Marseille v PSG by showing highlights of games between the teams in the last decade.

BeIN Sports showed France's 2018 World Cup final win against Croatia at the same time. Sky's Germany television channel spent the weekend re-running Bundesliga compilation packages featuring great goals and dramatic late winners.

Streaming service DAZN have put up every single Champions League Final since 1992. Newspaper Bild summed up the desperation for some sporting drama the best. They teamed up with the Chess24 website to livestream the World Chess Championship Candidates Tournament from Russia, under the headline: "Finally, some sport!"

## Pay cut for Bayern, other German clubs

FOOTBALLERS at Germany's top teams including Bayern Munich have agreed to take pay cuts to help clubs survive the economic impact of the coronavirus, media reports said Tuesday. Newspaper Bild reports that players and club officials at champions Bayern, top of the Bundesliga when the Bundesliga season was halted on March 13, have accepted a 20 percent cut in their salaries. Like all top European leagues the German top flight is losing income from broadcasting, sponsorships and ticket sales during the COVID-19 pandemic, with matches in Germany suspended until at least April 2. Bayern has a massive wage bill which reached 336 million euros (364 million dollars) last year, almost half of club turnover. AFP



Marco Asensio won a charity virtual gaming tournament. USA Today Sports