

**Rs 3.74 LAKH CRORE**  
pumped into banking system via 3 measures

**REPO RATE CUT**  
by 75 basis points to 4.4 per cent

**INVISIBLE ASSASSIN**  
has to be fought on massive scale: Das

## Day 3: RBI cuts deep, 3-month EMI pause

### Tough times never last, only tough people and tough institutions do, says Governor

GEORGE MATHEW  
MUMBAI, MARCH 27

A DAY after the government unveiled a set of measures to target farmers and unorganised sector workers at the bottom of the pyramid, the Reserve Bank of India Friday announced a three-month moratorium on loan repayments and slashed its main policy rate by a larger-than-expected 75 basis points and mandatory cash reserve ratio (CRR) of banks by 100 basis points. This came with an array of measures to stabilise the



RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Friday. PTI

financial markets and reduce the pain of borrowers and industries hit by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are fears that widespread job losses and destruction of demand because of the lockdown and the pandemic's effect on the economy, will set off unprecedented economic distress across all sectors and levels. The benchmark Sensex plunged 1,300 points intra-day and closed lower by 131 points at 29,815.59 after the RBI said the projected annual growth was "at risk" due to the outbreak.

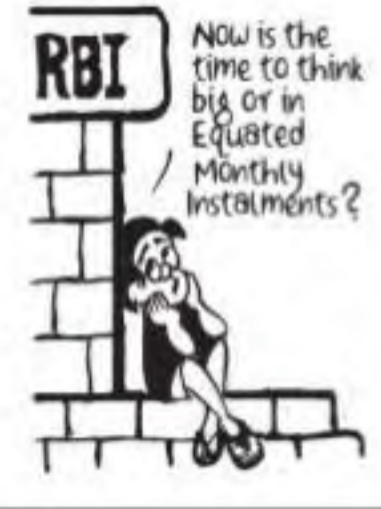
Easing the burden on bor-

rowers, the RBI said banks are being permitted to allow a moratorium of three months on payment of instalments in respect of all term loans outstanding as on March 1, 2020. This, effectively, means that borrowers hit by the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown would not have to pay equated monthly instalments (EMIs) for the next three months even as they will have to pay the entire interest accrued at the end of this moratorium period. The move is expected to benefit small, medium and big industries hit by the lockdown

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

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EXPLAINED

UNPACKING THE EMI DEAL

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### Big booster dose but interest waiver could have given small borrower a firmer cushion

SANDEEP SINGH & P VAIDYANATHAN IYER  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

A DAY after the Finance Minister announced a modest relief package for the poor that may need to be expanded, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das Tuesday opened up the central bank armoury and used a variety of weapons to counter the distress due to the sudden and sharp destruction of demand, exacer-

bated by the lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19.

Das slashed the policy rate, flushed the financial system with liquidity using multiple instruments, and used conventional as well as unconventional tools to support the economy. The most potent move, a game changer by all means, was the call to extend a three-month moratorium on repayment of all term loans. While it will definitely

give a breather to all companies, it will be a life saver for the micro enterprises, proprietors with small loans, as well as individuals such as taxi and auto drivers, or small shop owners, who are facing sudden loss of income.

In doing so, the RBI, probably, missed out enlarging the benefit to the small borrower. It could have avoided charging interest on outstanding

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### Delhi braces, CM says told of 'potential Stage 3' spread



'Ramping up capacity for even 1000 daily cases'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

CHIEF MINISTER Arvind Kejriwal Friday said he had been told to "prepare for a potential Stage 3 outbreak of Covid-19 in Delhi" and was, therefore taking steps to handle the situation even if it gets 1,000 COVID-19 cases a day.

Stage 3 denotes community transmission of the virus.

Delhi has seen 40 coronavirus cases so far, including two deaths. While 30 people who tested positive came from abroad, the remaining 10 are cases of local transmission.

In a tweet, Kejriwal said: "I have recd the report from the panel of doctors headed by Dr Sareen recommending measures to prepare for a potential Stage 3 outbreak of Covid-19 in Delhi. We are ramping up our

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A migrant worker and his family on the move in Ghazipur, Delhi-UP border on NH-24, Friday night. They are heading home to their village in UP. Gajendra Yadav

## Hapless migrants on road, broken supply chains show glaring gaps in how Centre, states implement lockdown

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

CARAVANS OF migrant labourers walking hundreds of kilometres along highways and across shuttered cities, running out of food and the nationwide disruption in supply chains have exposed glaring gaps in the implementation of the 21-day Covid-19 lockdown the Prime

Minister announced on March 24 by the Centre and the states.

Indeed, as many as four clarificatory notes had to be issued by the Home Ministry since the PM's speech to expand the list of essential supplies and services.

And today the Ministry urged states to help migrants with food and shelter and prevent their cross-state movement — essentially telling them to fix the mess they had done little to create.

"The lockdown could have been planned better, not at four-hour notice," said an official citing the South Africa example where a 21-day lockout that began Friday midnight got a notice of three days.

That's why after several reports of police toppling vegetable carts, stopping supply trucks, there were new additions to the Home Ministry's list of essential items and services almost

every day since the PM's speech.

Consider the sequence of events.

Notably, a lockdown until March 31 had been announced right after the Janata Curfew of March 22 following a meeting between the Centre and the states. Many states invoked the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, and restricted public gatherings and non-essential movement.

On March 23, Cabinet

Secretary Rajiv Gauba wrote to Chief Secretaries of all states and Union territories that restrictions be "rigorously imposed."

After the PM's announcement on March 24 at 8 pm, the MHA issued guidelines on restrictions and said that "shops, including ration shops dealing with food, groceries, fruits and vegetables, dairy and milk booths, meat and fish, animal fodder" were exempted.

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### Fear and mistrust on way, at home: Migrant workers bear the brunt

SANTOSH SINGH, MANISH SAHU & DIVYA GOYAL  
PATNA, LUCKNOW, LUDHIANA, MARCH 27

**CORONA COUNT**  
724 CASES 17 DEATHS  
67 RECOVERED  
27,688 samples from 26,798 individuals tested

NOTICES OUTSIDE villages announce a ban on their entry. Security guards armed with sticks turn them away. And neighbours let them in only after doctors vouch for their health.

Migrant workers forced to return home due to lack of work, shelter and food are facing the brunt of the national shutdown to contain the coronavirus outbreak with wary villagers in states, such as Bihar, UP, Jharkhand and Punjab, resorting to "strict measures" to avoid contact with them.

The state governments have promised assistance in the form of relief camps and medical help.

But on the ground, the workers returning on foot — inter-state public transport has been shut down — are facing fear and mistrust along the way and at home.

In Bihar, a day after Chief Minister Nitish Kumar asked other states to help them, Additional Secretary (Home) Amir Subhani said: "We issued a circular to all district magistrates to make arrangements for

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### 45 lakh students stuck as major entrance tests set for delay, JEE & NEET deferred

RITIKA CHOPRA  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

AS MANY as 45 lakh students preparing for major competitive examinations scheduled over the next three months are stranded as the nationwide lockdown will upset the examination calendar by at least a month.

JEE (Advanced), JEE (Main), NEET, UGC-NET, CSIR UGC-NET and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) AIEEA scheduled in April, May and June will be affected by the lockdown, officials told *The Indian Express*.

Of these, the government has already postponed JEE (Main), which was going to be held between April 7 and 11, and NEET on May 3. JEE (Main) is the gateway exam for admission to the National Institutes of Technology.

The anticipated delay may extend beyond a month if the lockdown doesn't end on April 15. "Some of the major entrance tests, over the next few months, are being conducted by one body, which is the National Testing Agency. There is a process for every exam — starting from conduct of the test to evaluation and declaration of

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### CM leading virus fight: Welcome Centre's package, but Kerala will need much more

LIZ MATHEW  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

THE CENTRE'S announcement of a financial package to address the economic distress set off by the coronavirus crisis is a welcome step, but a state like Kerala cannot overcome the crisis in the long run unless liberal assistance is provided, the state's Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan, said.

Kerala, the chief minister told *The Indian Express*, hopes that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be "positive enough to understand the gravity" of the situation.

Vijayan said the state govern-



'NIPAH EXPERIENCE HELPED US... MINUTEST DETAILS WERE ANALYSED'

PINARAYI VIJAYAN  
CHIEF MINISTER OF KERALA

ment fears major job losses in the Middle East, and that any global slowdown has a fallout on Kerala's economy. The crisis in the United States and Europe too, will adversely impact Kerala's IT and tourism industries, the chief minister said.

"The package announced by the Centre is a welcome measure. And we have decided to make use of every scheme to ensure maximum relief to the people. However, the Centre has to go further. As all of you know, it is the state governments, which directly deal with the crisis. We interact with people, and understand the

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INSIDE



BORIS JOHNSON TESTS POSITIVE

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SATISH GUJRAL PASSES AWAY

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### Mumbai surgeon whose father died tests positive, search on for his patients

TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA & SAGAR RAJPUT  
MUMBAI, MARCH 27

AN 85-YEAR-OLD general surgeon died hours after he tested positive for novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Mumbai Thursday night. The primary test reports of his son, a cardiac surgeon in his late fifties, and grandson, are positive; their confirmatory test reports are awaited.

The 85-year-old, who had underlying conditions of diabetes

and heart disease, is suspected to have caught the infection from his grandson, who returned from the UK on March 12. While his son was quarantined at their home in Girgaum, the cardiac surgeon continued his consultations at Sir HN Reliance Hospital and Saifee Hospital. He has claimed he stopped doing surgeries a week ago. Local authorities are now trying to trace his patients.

"We have informed other municipal wards to reach out to these hospitals and track all patients treated by him. We

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## Kabul gurdwara attacker from Kerala, left for Afghanistan in 2018

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

ONE OF the three Islamic State (IS) suicide attackers who stormed a gurdwara in Kabul on Wednesday and killed 25 people is suspected to be a recruit from Kerala. The attacker has been identified by central intelligence agencies as Mohammed Muhsin based on information provided by his family, who now live in Kannur, sources in the security establishment said.

An Islamic State magazine, *al Naba*, on Friday published a picture of the suicide attackers

identifying one of them as Abu Khalid al-Hindi. The picture has been identified by the parents of Muhsin as that of their son.

"Muhsin's mother has also claimed that she received a message over Telegram from an IS associate of Muhsin's yesterday that her son had attained martyrdom in the Kabul attack. However, when we asked her to show the message she said she had deleted it out of fear. As of now we have the family's claim to go by," a senior central agency official said.

A day earlier, the IS-linked Amaq news agency had issued a statement claiming the attack was revenge for Kashmir.

Central agency sources said there are two Mohammed Muhsins who joined IS from Kerala, and the Kabul attacker should not be confused with the one that was killed in a US airstrike in July 2019. That Muhsin was an engineering graduate from Mallapuram who had joined the IS in 2017.

The Muhsin who attacked the Kabul gurdwara, intelligence sources said, belongs to Trikkarippur in Kasargod district, and had left for Afghanistan in 2018 to join IS in Khorasan Province, or ISKP (comprising Kunar and Nangarhar). This was a good two years after some two



Afghan police at the gurdwara after the attack Reuters (right) Mohammed Muhsin, one of the attackers. Express photo



LASHKAR MAN LEADS THE IS-KHORASAN PAGE 10

dozen youths from Kasargod and Mallapuram had left for Afghanistan via Iran in 2016.

"He was not part of the first module — a group of 21 members — from Kerala who travelled to Nangarhar in Afghanistan. Muhsin from Payyannur had left home some time in early 2018 in search of a job in Dubai. Later he travelled to Afghanistan from Dubai," a senior Kerala Police officer told *The Indian Express*. Trikkarippur (Kasargod) is a small town very close to Payyannur (Kannur) in northern Kerala.

"He (Muhsin) is said to be 28 years old and is a school dropout. He had left for Dubai in 2018, and

from there he went to Afghanistan. His family lives in Kannur," a central intelligence official said.

The official added that intelligence agencies were trying to ascertain if any of the other Kabul attackers too, was Indian. Sources in the Ministry of Home Affairs said a decision on whether to hand over the case to the National Investigation Agency is yet to be taken. According to the amended NIA Act, the central agency can take over the investigation into a terror attack overseas if any of the victims is Indian.

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WHY DOE-EYED NIMMI WAS ONE OF HINDI CINEMA'S LAST LINKS TO THE GOLDEN AGE

The yesteryear star who died on March 25 aged 87 was the last of the greats from 1950s Bollywood.

VIDEO OF THE DAY



SPORTING EVENTS ACROSS THE GLOBE

Coronavirus has affected and disrupted various sporting events

FULL COVERAGE



CORONAVIRUS

Big challenge for India's 37%—'internal migrants'

EXPRESS AUDIO

The consequences of postponing the Tokyo Olympics

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

In the latest episode of the Express Sports podcast, we discuss what it means for the world's biggest sporting event to be postponed.

FROM PAGE ONE

Kejriwal

capacity for an eventuality of 1,000 daily positive cases, for testing, treatment and isolation."

"The situation is under control right now. There were days when Delhi did not have a single case in a day. But looking at other countries like the UK, America, if the situation goes out of control, we need to be prepared. I had formed a five-member committee to prepare a roadmap for the future scenario if cases increase in Delhi. The plan is divided into three stages. Firstly, if Delhi starts getting 100 cases per day; secondly, if the cases reach 500 per day; and thirdly, if it reaches 1,000 per day," he said.

Kejriwal, however, added that there was no evidence to suggest Delhi has reached the third stage — that of community spread. Community spread of the disease is when infection cannot be traced back to someone who travelled from abroad and tested positive or someone who came in touch with a person who tested positive.

"Don't think that this means things have gone out of control. We want to be ready for the possibility. Delhi has done well so far but we need to keep learning from other countries' experiences and not sit idle," he said.

The government as well as private hospitals are being asked to prepare to care for a large number of COVID-19 patients in case the need arises, as per the plan.

Kejriwal also appealed to migrant workers, many of whom are walking to their villages in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh, to stay in the city.

"All migrants in Delhi are Delhiites. They are our responsibility and we will do everything we can to help them. On Friday, we made arrangements to distribute food packets to 2 lakh people at several locations, including from school buildings. By Saturday, this number will be 4 lakh," he said.

Kejriwal, who addressed a press conference with Lt Governor Anil Bajaj in the afternoon, said the Delhi government has managed to transfer Rs 5,000 as various pensions in the accounts of 8 lakh people so far.

Pinarayi Vijayan

real nature of their difficulties," Vijayan said in an interview with The Indian Express.

The Kerala government, he said, has submitted a proposal before the central government, which includes a request to enhance its borrowing limit at this trying time. "During the Prime Minister's video conference with chief ministers, I had pointed out some measures to support the states. I would expect the central government to understand the whole gamut of issues and respond positively," he said.

Kerala, which has been fighting to contain the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus ever since the first case was reported in January after students returned from Wuhan, has announced a series of packages despite the "acute shortage of resources", Vijayan said.

"But that should not prevent the government from bringing relief to the people. This was the principle on which we announced the Rs 20,000 crore package," Vijayan said. The programme included a health package, loan assistance, free food-grains, advance payment of welfare pension, increased allocation for MNREGS, subsidised meals, tax relief, and more time to pay tax arrears.

Loans worth Rs 2,000 crore are being made available to families with the help of Kudumbasree, a community organisation of neighbourhood groups of women in the state. "We will not charge any interest on these loans. We had adopted a

similar measure after the (2018) floods. This had helped thousands of families to come back to their normal life," the chief minister said.

Vijayan explained the 'Kerala model' in the fight against the novel coronavirus that has triggered the COVID-19 global pandemic. The state is currently focused on containing the spread of the disease by taking all measures to disconnect affected people from society — a process that he and Kerala's health minister closely monitor personally to ensure there is inter- and intra-department coordination, Vijayan said.

Kerala's "well-knit system of local self governments and their participation" have come of great help since the first phase of the outbreak, the chief minister said. The state had activated its health and allied departments soon after the outbreak in China, he said.

Kerala had learnt its lessons from the 2018 Nipah virus crisis, and had made it a point to imbibe good experiences from across the globe, Vijayan said. "The protocol we have drawn up is on the basis of this experience, but certainly we made it Kerala-specific considering the peculiarity of our state. We were mindful of our strength as well as our weaknesses. Our main strength is the advances we have made in the social sector. We may lack resources but we certainly have a high degree of awareness, education, participation and commitment of people," the chief minister said.

He lauded both the citizens and Opposition parties in Kerala for their cooperation in facing the crisis. "Kerala has always risen above parochial and partisan barriers when such exigencies come," the chief minister said.

Fear, mistrust

migrants not being allowed inside their villages. But the villagers are right in doing so. This will also help the government screen suspected cases of COVID-19."

Officials said they have been receiving calls from panchayat heads to keep the workers under observation. Many villages have posted people at entry points, which are being barricaded with bamboo sticks, they said.

At Ramchua village in Banka district, on the border with Jharkhand, a resident said that a worker returning from Mumbai was allowed in only after doctors convinced residents that he was healthy. "But everyone is keeping a safe distance from him," said the resident, Sonu Kumar.

In UP, workers returning to Lakhimpur Kheri, Bahraich, Gonda, Jaunpur, Bijnor and Kannauj are being made to wait outside for hours till they get tested for the virus.

"Two days ago, around 20 people returned from Panipat (Haryana). They tried to enter forcibly but we called the police. Finally, we let them in after they agreed to get the tests done," said Nardev Singh, from Jamaluddinpur in Bijnor.

In Jharkhand, notices posted outside Kadma village in Kanke read: "Kripya bahar se aane wale vyakti iss gaon mein pravesh na karein (Outsiders, please do not enter this village)". Another warned: "Aane par lathi padega (If you come, you will be beaten with sticks)".

At Chhina in Punjab's Gurdaspur, where 15 people, including six NRIs and nine others who returned from other states, have been placed under "home quarantine", notices warn against "outsiders" — and three of five entry points have been barricaded, with four newly hired guards manning the other two.

"I have vowed to ensure that the coronavirus will not enter," said Panthdeep Singh, 28, sarpanch of Chhina with 302 homes and 1,600 residents.

"We have to pay each guard Rs

Tough times never last; only tough people, tough institutions do: RBI Guv

and the fall in demand, as well as home and auto loan customers.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI, which advanced its scheduled bi-monthly meeting in the wake of the corona crisis, focused on making funds cheaper and increasing liquidity in the financial system. While highlighting the risks that Covid-19 poses for the global economy, with the resultant uncertainty in outlook for India as well, the panel cut the Repo rate — the rate at which the banks borrow from the RBI — by a huge margin of 75 basis points to 4.4 per cent from 5.15 per cent.

The decision of the panel, which was earlier supposed to meet on April 3, is expected to bring down interest rates on both deposits and loans. In another move, the RBI cut the CRR — the portion of net time and demand liabilities or deposits to be kept with the RBI as a statutory reserve — by 100 basis points to 3 per cent. This will release an estimated Rs 137,000 crore into the banking system, thus augmenting the lendable resources of the banks.

The policy panel also opted for a 90-basis-points reduction in the reverse repo — or the rate at which the RBI borrows funds from banks — to 4 per

cent, virtually making it the effective overnight rate. The steep cut in reverse repo rate will also dissuade banks from parking funds with the RBI and instead prompt them to lend more to the needy sectors.

The RBI's package comes a day after the government unveiled a Rs 1.70-lakh-crore economic package involving free foodgrain and cooking gas to poor for the next three months, higher wages to workers and measures to boost liquidity of employees as part of measures to ease the economic impact of lockdown.

Announcing the package in Mumbai, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said: "We are living through an extraordinary and unprecedented situation. Everything hinges on the depth of the COVID-19 outbreak, its spread and its duration. Clearly, a war effort has to be mounted and is being mounted to combat the virus, involving both conventional and unconventional measures in continuous battle-ready mode."

The decision to slash repo rate by 75 bps was taken by the MPC in a 4:2 majority decision. Two members proposed a 50 basis points reduction.

"Life in the time of Covid-19 has been one of unprecident loss and isolation. Yet, it is worthwhile to remember

that tough times never last; only tough people and tough institutions do," Das said.

The other big measures announced by the RBI include floating rate long-term repos for investment grade corporate bonds and commercial papers, deferral of interest payments, capital conservation buffer deferral by six months and off-shore NDF market relaxations. Apart from the moratorium on term loans, the deferring of interest payments on working capital and the easing of working capital financing will not qualify as a default and there will be no adverse impact on the credit history of the beneficiaries.

Bankers said the real out-of-the-box move though was the targeted long term repo operations (T-LTRO), whereby banks will be forced to buy up to three-year corporate bonds. In the last two weeks, the market had a very sharp increase in market yields of even high rated PSU corporate bonds indicative of market dislocation and risk. This T-LTRO will help to get liquidity back into the corporate bond markets and will also lead to a fall in short term bond yields of triple A rated corporates.

The liquidity measures announced by the RBI were to the tune of Rs 3.74 lakh crore across three measures com-

prising LTRO, CRR cut of 100 bps and the increase in marginal standing facility (MSF) to 3 per cent of the statutory liquidity ratio (SLR).

"The large rate cut, the adjustment in capital conservation buffer, the moratorium on repayments and the bazooka of conventional CRR cut and unconventional liquidity measure of incentivising banks to support the commercial paper market all will help financial markets stabilise, lead to immediate rate transmission and address the credit needs of the real economy," said State Bank of India Chairman Rajnish Kumar.

Das said Covid-19 stalks the global economy and the outlook is highly uncertain and negative. "Authorities all over the world are mobilising on a massive scale to fight an invisible assassin. India has locked down. Economic activity and financial markets are under severe stress. Finance is the life-line of the economy. Keeping it flowing is the paramount objective," the RBI Governor said, adding that the aggressive action and stance of the MPC provides a befitting launching pad.

The RBI has quarantined 150 members of its staff and service providers together with the IT facilitators as part of the central bank's business continuity plan (BCP).

Big booster dose but interest waiver could have given small borrower a firmer cushion

loans during the three-month moratorium period at least for loans of smaller ticket size, say a home loan of up to Rs 15 lakh. In stressful times, and dramatic lifestyle changes due to social distancing, this cost should not add to the worry of the small borrower.

While exact numbers are not available, the average ticket size of home loans extended by SBI and HDFC — which together command a 40 per cent market share in the home loan segment — is around Rs 27 lakh. But the number of loans that fall under Rs 15 lakh would be around 50 per cent. Over the last 3-4 years, bankers said small ticket size loans of under Rs 15 lakh were taken by many

who applied under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. For HDFC, PMAY accounts for more than a third of total loan accounts.

From the fiscal, regulatory and monetary measures taken over the last two days, it appears the Governor has a dimmer view of the nature and extent of economic disruption. The RBI's measures on the credit front would alleviate cash flow problems and prevent the liquidity problem from turning into a solvency problem for firms. But the problem essentially is of economic stagnation, which is largely due to an income shock. So, the RBI measures will have only a limited impact

on the key problem of income loss.

This has to be the government's role, and could be achieved more by enhancing fiscal support. Probably that's why the RBI Governor noted that strong fiscal measures were needed to deal with the situation. May be, this points to RBI's own assessment the government may do more than what it did Thursday.

But Governor Das hit the ball out of the park in his messaging. Some of his lines provided more comfort than his actions. In fact, the choice of words amplified the effect of the decisions he took.

The unprecedented and challenging times notwith-

standing, he said, "I remain an optimist. India's fundamentals are strong, deficits are lower and inflation is benign." Confidence.

"Covid-10 is upon us, this too shall pass. Tough times never last, tough people and institutions do," he said. Hope.

"All instruments, conventional and unconventional, are on the table," Das said, suggesting he was ready for the long haul.

In sending this message of hope and confidence out, Das also told his audience — the hyper-sensitive financial markets, and all its consumers — that he was keeping the RBI safe, and has a business continuity plan for the organisation ready.

350 a day but the priority is to stop outsiders from entering. The guards have to get my permission before allowing anyone to enter, after noting down their details in a register," he said.

Chhina, incidentally, was selected for the Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar and Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar in 2019 for development work.

Since the lockdown began, a notice pasted outside the village, in Punjabi, read: "In view of the coronavirus outbreak, entry of outsiders is completely banned... as per orders of the sarpanch."

The village is "sanitised every 48 hours" with disinfectant sprayed on streets, poles, benches, and even door knobs. Another notice outside warns asks others not to visit. "Not just NRIs, but villagers working in other states such as Delhi, J&K, Maharashtra and Chennai have returned and are being kept in isolation," Panthdeep said.

"A vegetable seller is allowed every day. He wears a mask and uses a hand sanitiser, and villagers are called in turns. We are provid-

ing grocery items to 118 families of daily wagers, and if the lockdown is extended, we will start providing them cooked food," he said. "But the restrictions on outsiders will continue as long as the corona threat is there."

— (WITH ABHISHEK ANGAD IN RANCHI)

Surgeon

suspect he had not informed the hospitals about his son's travel history," a civic official said.

Sir H N Reliance Hospital declined to comment on whether the cardiac surgeon had consulted patients in the last 15 days. Even after testing positive Thursday evening, the cardiac surgeon and his son reportedly refused to get admitted to an isolation ward. On Friday morning, when Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) officials, accompanied by police personnel, reached their South Mumbai residence, they insisted they would remain in home isolation. "We threatened to use police force; they agreed eventually," a BMC official said.

"The problem in this case was that the samples were sent to a

private laboratory for testing. These samples need to be reconfirmed by a second test in a government laboratory. The two people who tested positive must have been allowed to leave because a confirmatory test was pending. We will inquire into this," Anup Kumar Yadav, Director, National Health Mission, said.

The 85-year-old developed cough and cold earlier this week. On Thursday, he was taken to Saifee Hospital's CT scan department. He underwent a scan and doctors suspected coronavirus. His swab was immediately sent to Metropolis laboratory, a private lab, for testing. By then, he had interacted with the hospital's head of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), nurses and other staff members.

Dr Vernon Desa, medical director of Saifee Hospital, said the CT scan unit was disinfected and its staff advised home quarantine. "All containment and surveillance measures have been implemented to ensure the safety of our staff, patients, and visitors," he said. The hospital continues to remain operational, he added.

After the 85-year-old's swab tested positive, he was shifted to

Hinduja Hospital, one of the government-approved isolation facilities among private hospitals.

By Thursday evening, the cardiac surgeon and his son had also tested positive.

The 85-year-old died around 12.30 am Friday, after developing respiratory complications. By 4.30 am, his last rites were held at a private cemetery on Chami Road. A civic official said they were not involved in the process.

"We have issued guidelines to private hospitals on wearing personal protective equipment while conducting the last rites. Hinduja Hospital must have provided protective gear, we don't know what procedure was undertaken. It was done privately," said the official.

Another official said that by the time they received information and arrived at the residence, the funeral was over. "They (family) initially kept giving us names of different burial grounds," said an official.

According to the protocol for infectious diseases, the body has to be sealed in a plastic bag and disinfected with sodium hypochlorite. No family member is allowed to touch it.

"The family members claimed they did not participate in the funeral, and a family friend conducted it. We are trying to verify their claim," said a police officer.

Meanwhile, the samples of four more family members have been sent for testing. They have all been isolated for now.

As per protocol, a government hospital immediately isolates all close contacts of a COVID-19 patient and tests them. They are only discharged if they test negative. Private hospitals are expected to follow the same protocol.

Hinduja Hospital did not comment on why the body was released to the family for the last rites. State officials said since the confirmatory test report remains pending, an inquiry will be held if the case is confirmed as COVID-19.

"Personally, it was disheartening for me that a family of doctors behaved in such a way. We are trying so hard to contain the infection," said Suresh Kakani, Additional Municipal Commissioner, BMC. He said Hinduja Hospital should not have released the body to the family since the primary test report was positive.

Migrants on road

But March 25 saw chaos on the ground with stores running out of supplies as trucks were not allowed to cross borders, vegetable and fruit kiosks were forcibly shut by police, doctors were not allowed to cross interstate borders and e-commerce delivery staff were beaten up even as their warehouses were forced to down shutters.

By evening, MHA had added more exemptions to its prohibitory orders and written to Central Association of Private Security Industry among others to not lay off security guards.

On March 26, MHA again issued a clarification that its guidelines included exemptions for "animal feed and fodder" and acknowledged that some states were not allowing the same.

On the same day, Delhi police released a long list of e-commerce platforms issuing orders to allow their movement only to withdraw it within hours.

On March 27, it issued another addendum to its guidelines. This time it added among essentials various farming-related goods and services.

Just as with supply chains, on the migrants issue, too, the response was muddled.

Significantly, the exodus of out-of-work migrants from Mumbai and Pune going back to their homes in UP and Bihar, complaining of jobs lost and afraid of the pandemic, had begun even before the Janata Curfew on March 22.

Yet, the lockdown until March 31 was extended that day and the Railways had, by afternoon, issued orders of suspension of trains until March 31. Result: Stranded, laid off and fearful, migrants hit the street home.

Police and state governments admit the PM's 21-day announcement caught them off guard. Experts said that the coronavirus outbreak was not an earthquake — that catches an administration by surprise — nor was it a development that called for a closely guarded response.

Clearly, the Centre and states had agreed but not coordinated on the lockdown. A top Delhi Police officer said that so sudden was it, that the police, too, needed time to work out the details of its implementation and figure out what was an essential service.

Assam Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma suggested that states were not prepared for such a lockdown. In an interview to The Indian Express, Sarma said the state government was prepared for a week-long lockdown but a 21-day lockdown would raise challenges for all North-East

states.

"No one has stocks or preparations for 21 days. It will be difficult for us to manage. I am a little worried about how people will react after a week," said Sarma,

also the convener of North East Democratic Alliance, a BJP-led coalition in the Northeast. Officials point to the contrast in Jammu and Kashmir. "We were not told that Article 370 was going to be abrogated but we were told that a lockdown was coming. So for almost a week, we held mock drills on how to maintain supplies during the lockdown," a bureaucrat said.

Former UP DGP Prakash Singh, who also runs the Indian Police Foundation which has sent a paper on how to manage a lockdown to all police chiefs, said that an advance internal warning would have streamlined efforts.

"I have a feeling that different wings of government were taken by surprise. There should have been a notice of 48 hours. You have suddenly stopped everything, including all trains and airlines. Maintaining restrictions of 75%, mobility of 25% could have been allowed initially. Administration would have prepared by then. They should have been given clear instructions. No one knew this was going to happen. But it should settle down in a few days. I would still say we are doing better than many nations," he said.

A former police chief of Jammu and Kashmir said that the key to an effective lockdown and seamless civil supplies is advance preparation and comprehensive "pass" system — both lacking this time.

"The dependence is excessively on force. The police have actually done a good job of ensuring a lockdown," he said. "Supplies is not the job of the police but of the civil administration. The police have no clue about the supply chain. There are laid-down systems which run down from DM to tehsildar. Everyone's role is defined."

45 lakh students

results — so any change in one will have a cascading effect on the ones that follow," an official said.

This could also affect the undergraduate admission schedule and the new academic year at the institutions which base their admission on these examinations, officials said.

There are roughly 16 lakh candidates registered to appear for the medical entrance test NEET and 9 lakh for JEE (Main). The registration process is still on for the teacher eligibility test UGC-NET, CSIR UGC-NET and the entrance examinations for admission to ICAR. The government expects 9 lakh to 10 lakh candidates to register for each of the first two tests and 2.5 lakh for ICAR. Some candidates may be common among these exams.

IIT-Delhi, which is the organising institute for the JEE (Advanced) this year, had called a meeting this week to discuss changes to the examination schedule. "Once JEE (Main) is delayed, then a delay in JEE (Advanced) is inevitable," said a senior professor of IIT-Delhi. Every year, roughly 1.5 lakh to 2 lakh candidates appear for JEE (Advanced) for entry to the IITs. These candidates are selected out of the JEE (Main) candidate pool.

Competitive examinations aside, CBSE examination results for Classes 12 are also expected to be delayed by a month, at least. "We are left with 41 papers of Class 10 and 12, of which six are major papers of Class 12: Business Studies, Hindi (Core and Elective), Home Science, Sociology and Information Practice and Computer Science. Last year the results were announced by May 2. That seems unlikely this year. We are looking at a delay of at least a month, provided the lockdown ends on April 14," a senior CBSE official said.

# 3 THE OUTBREAK THE CITY

**DISTRICT MAGISTRATES ASKED TO RUN 2 HUNGER RELIEF SHELTERS IN EACH WARD**

## CM says 4 lakh will be fed every day

**SOURAV ROY BARMAN & ANANYA TIWARI**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

WITH THOUSANDS of men, women and children thronging the capital's 222-odd homeless shelters for food, stretching the system at many places, the Delhi government Friday ramped up arrangements, directing district magistrates to run at least two hunger relief centres each in all 272 municipal wards of the city.

On the first day, 325 schools were notified as hunger relief centres, an initiative announced by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. In its official order, the government acknowledged that the homeless shelter management agencies were finding it difficult to handle the situation.

Delhi houses lakhs of migrant workers who are in acute distress due to the lockdown to contain the spread of coronavirus. It has brought economic activities to a halt, forcing thousands to leave for their villages, while those unable to do so are struggling to arrange two meals a day.

The order to open new relief centres was issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA). Kejriwal said the new arrangement will benefit around two lakh people on the first day, and up to four lakh from Saturday.

For sourcing and distributing food, district magistrates have been authorised to take a call on whether to rope in agencies involved in supplying mid-day meals or charitable organisations.

"Menu for the meals will be Jan Aahar menu and the maximum price payable by the government for each meal is capped at Rs 20 per person per meal or 'Jan Aahar' rates, whichever is minimum. To begin with, all DMs may identify two suitable locations in every municipal ward falling within their jurisdiction, preferably a school or community centre, which should function as food centres/hunger relief centres. At every such centre, the agency concerned shall arrange for 500 meals twice (lunch and dinner) per day," the order states.

Food disbursement mechanism

has also been tweaked a little. Unlike night shelters, where anyone can land up for lunch and dinner, in this case the government is redirecting people ringing up distress helplines to such relief centres. All eleven districts are running their own helplines.

"Extending food relief while also keeping social distancing in mind was becoming difficult at night shelters. So, in this case, a person calling up the helpline will be told about the nearest centre. Flying squads are also active at vulnerable spots and communities are being informed about hunger relief centres," a district magistrate said.

While the South district administration has roped in charitable trusts as well as mid-day meal suppliers, Northeast Delhi authorities are relying solely on agencies supplying mid-day meals.

During a visit to some of the centres, staff were seen trying to spread the word about the new arrangements in their neighbourhoods.

Many AAP MLAs also took to social media to share the development. Burari MLA Sanjeev Jha announced on Twitter that some Delhi government schools in Burari, a locality dominated by migrants, Civil Lines, Timarpur and Kamla Nagar will provide free lunch and dinner to labourers.

At the Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya, Civil Lines, Vandana Rustagi, a TGT English teacher, arranged soap and sanitisers and chalked out circles to help people maintain distance while taking the food packets.

Principal of the school Urvasi Gupta said, "I was told about the decision yesterday. The rice and dal is coming in containers from Burari, where the trust which supplies mid-day meals in our school functions from."

Rustagi said making people aware of the initiative was the first challenge. "We have put up a board outside our gate, but how will people know? Hopefully, word will spread by evening," she said, adding that 23 people, including a toddler, had lunch during the day.



9:30 pm, Delhi-UP border, Ghazipur: Migrants being stopped on NH-24 on their way to their villages in UP, Friday. *Gajendra Yadav*

Most of them were labourers employed at a construction project at a government school a kilometre away. Rekha Chaudhary (19), a labourer from MP, said, "I am eight months' pregnant. Our contractor left us without any money and is not picking up his phone."

Her mother-in-law said they had to break grass from a nearby field and cook it with salt to eat with a chapati before this school opened its doors.

At Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya in Civil Lines, Vijay Kumar, a tehsildar, said, "I informed the pradhan of the Majnu ka Tila basti of Hindu refugees from Pakistan about the food distribution."

During the press briefing, Kejriwal also sought to reassure his counterparts in other states that the Delhi government will take care of every individual. "No matter which state a person hails from, Jharkhand, Bihar or Tamil Nadu, they are our people too," the CM said.

## Despite assurance, exodus continues: 'Virus will last months, what about then?'

**JIGNASA SINHA**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

WALKING IN the rain, protecting his three daughters with chunnis, 35-year-old Guddu and his wife Sapna started crying as they saw a truck leave at the Ghazipur border on Friday. Several families that reached the border had managed to hitch a ride on the truck.

"We left our home in Budh Vihar at 1 pm and have been walking since. We haven't had any food and were hoping to get a ride. We heard a truck would take us, we ran but missed it. We live in Farrukhabad and it might take us three days to reach there, but we won't give up. It's better to die with our families in UP than die alone here. It's been three days

**We left Budh Vihar at 1 pm, have been walking since. We haven't had food and were hoping to get a ride. We heard a truck would take us... we ran but missed it.**

**GUDDU, 35**  
CONSTRUCTION WORKER

and I had to beg to get food for my children. My wife hasn't eaten since yesterday," said Guddu, who worked at a construction site and has run out of money for rent and food since the lockdown. He has been living in Delhi for three months.

He is one of thousands of migrant workers who have been streaming out of their rented

shanties in Delhi and, in the absence of transport, walking to their villages. This, despite the Delhi government promising to feed four lakh people every day.

At the Ghazipur border on Friday night, a few children cried, while others begged their parents to let them rest by the roadside for a while. Adding to their woes was the rain, since most of them did not have a change of clothes.

Hundreds stood under a bridge and waited for the rain to stop while others walked on the highway. Meanwhile, police tried to reason with them. Senior officers, including DCP (East) Jasmeet Singh, requested families to stay in Delhi and assured them that police and authorities will help.

Pushpa (45) told the personnel: "You can only provide us with

food packets for a day or two. This coronavirus will last for weeks, maybe months. We can't trust the government. Did anyone think about us for the last four days? Why do they care now?"

Sitting with her husband on the roadside, Mahadevi (47) cursed her luck. "We shifted to Seelampur in November. Three months after that, communal clashes took place and we had to go back to our home in Datia, Madhya Pradesh. We came back 20 days ago and now we have to leave again. I have no shelter or water, how will I maintain hygiene? I have packed three rotis for me and my husband. We had to leave behind all our belongings and vegetable stall. My children are with my sister in Datia," she said.

## At world mayor meet, Kejriwal spells out Delhi plan

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

DELHI CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal discussed the capital's fight against COVID-19 and the impact of the lockdown on migrant workers with mayors of different cities across the world.

Kejriwal was part of a global meeting organised by the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group to discuss the strategy to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

Last year, the Centre had denied Kejriwal the permission to attend the C40 World Mayors Summit in Copenhagen. For the CM to attend conferences and summits abroad, clearance from the Centre is required. Officials had said the Delhi government was told it was not right for Kejriwal to attend the summit as he is not a mayor. Kejriwal later participated in the summit through video conferencing.

Friday's meeting also saw 45 mayors in participation, including those from Los Angeles, Seoul, Paris, Milan, Istanbul, Rome, Johannesburg, London and Madrid.

As per a statement by the government, Kejriwal spoke about the lockdown as a way to prevent COVID-19's spread.

He said, "Delhi aggressively pursued the policy of identifying contacts and isolating them by learning from experiences of other countries. As a result, Delhi has 40 COVID-19 positive cases to date, 25 days after the first case was detected. However, we are not complacent. We wish to limit any further local transmission and would like to avoid entering stage 3 of community transmission. So, we have implemented a complete lockdown from March 23. The economic fallout of the lockdown has disproportionately impacted the city's poor, especially migrant workers from across the country who live in Delhi."

## DJB acts: Tankers sent to slum that ran out of water

**SHIVAM PATEL**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

ADAY after *The Indian Express* reported about a slum near South Delhi's Mahipalpur running out of water amid the coronavirus lockdown, the Delhi Jal Board came to its aid on Friday.

Comprising of about a hundred families involved in waste picking, the JJ cluster was not connected to the DJB's water network and the department's water tankers had stopped reaching there since the past few months. The only source of water for residents was a private borewell nearby which, they said, they were unable to reach due to police heavy handedness. Some also claimed the borewell had shut during the lockdown.

Sumil Kumar (30), a waste picker who has a family of 10, had told *The Indian Express* Thursday, "We have to stop the spread of this disease, and for that we have been told we need to keep washing hands. But how will we do that without any water? I have stopped going to work because of this."

On Friday, the DJB Friday sent water tankers to the slum around 10 am and the vice-chairman of the board, Raghav Chadha, said on Twitter, "Thanks for pointing it out. Water supply has been ensured."

Referring to Chadha's tweet, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind

Kejriwal wrote on Twitter: "Our team is working non-stop to ensure people face least difficulty during the lockdown. Urge all media friends to continue pointing out gaps in relief work during this lockdown."

Residents of the area, who until Thursday were worried about survival without water in the coming days, were relieved. Rekha, who lives with her family of six, said, "Two people came with a tanker, they asked us to come out, four at a time, keep our water drums outside our homes and go back in. They filled water for everyone here."

Kumar said they were in need of drinking water for a *Navratni puja*, which could not have been done with the potable water they had, which was being used for bathing, laundry, cooking and almost everything else.

DJB vice-chairman Chadha said, "The residents told the junior engineer of the area that they would require water supply twice a week and we will comply with that. Water pipelines are being laid in all unauthorised colonies in the city. Since JJ clusters are usually not connected to the DJB's water network, we send our tankers there. This is being ensured everywhere in the city."

He also said water issues reported in Northwest Delhi's Bhalswa Dairy would be checked and resolved.

भारत सरकार, अन्तरिक्ष विभाग / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, DEPARTMENT OF SPACE  
राष्ट्रीय वायुमंडलीय अनुसंधान प्रयोगशाला  
NATIONAL ATMOSPHERIC RESEARCH LABORATORY  
गादंकी - 517112, चित्तूर जिला आन्ध्र प्रदेश / GADANKI - 517 112, Chittoor Dist., Andhra Pradesh

विज्ञान सं. एनएआरएल/आरएमटी/आरए व आरएए/01/2020 दिनांक/Dated : 11.03.2020  
Advertisement No. NARL/RMT/RA & RF/01/2020

**01. कनिष्ठ अनुसंधानकर्ता (जेआरएफ) के पद/Junior Research Fellow (JRF) Positions:**  
एनएआरएल द्वारा जेआरएफ पदों के लिए निम्न सूचित के अनुसार आवेदन आमंत्रित किए जाते हैं - / NARL invites applications for the post of JRF as follows:-

कोड सं. Code No.	पद का नाम Name of the Position	पदों की सं. No. of Positions	अनिवार्य योग्यताएं Essential Qualifications
01.	कनिष्ठ अनुसंधानकर्ता (जेआरएफ) फेलोशिप की शर्तः प्रथम एवं द्वितीय वर्ष के लिए ₹.31,000/-प्र.मा + एचआरए और तदनुसार वर्षों के लिए ₹.35,000/-प्र.मा + एचआरए।	08	(अ) निम्नलिखित में प्रथम श्रेणी (60%) या समकक्ष ग्रेड में स्नातकोत्तर उपाधि / First class (60%) or equivalent grade in Post-Graduate degree in (i) भौतिकी/वायुमंडलीय विज्ञान/अन्तरिक्ष भौतिकी/ मौसम विज्ञान/विश्लेषणात्मक रसायन विज्ञान / Physics/ Atmospheric Science /Space Physics / Meteorology/ Analytical Chemistry. अथवा / OR (ii) मुख्य विषय के रूप में भौतिकी/वायुमंडलीय विज्ञान/ अन्तरिक्ष भौतिकी/मौसम विज्ञान के साथ पुरातात्विकी/पृथ्वी विज्ञान / Geophysics/ Earth System Science With Physics/ Atmospheric Science /Space Physics / Meteorology as core subjects अथवा / OR (iii) इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स/संचार इंजीनियरिंग/प्रकाशिक इंजीनियरिंग/ फोटोनिक्स/यंत्रिकी के किसी भी विशेषज्ञता / Any specialization of Electronics/ Communication Engineering/ Optical Engineering/ Photonics/ Instrumentation और / AND (आ) सीएसआईआर-यूजीसी नेट/गेट/जेएएम/ जेईएसटी में अर्हता प्राप्त। / Qualified in CSIR-UGC NET/GATE/ JAM/ JEST.

**सूचना/Note:** (i) जो लोग अंतिम वर्ष की परीक्षाओं के लिए उपस्थित हुए हैं, वे भी आवेदन करने के लिए योग्य हैं। हालांकि, साक्षात्कार के समय उन्हें अंतिम स्नातकोत्तर उपाधि प्रमाणपत्र प्रस्तुत करने की आवश्यकता है।/ Those who have appeared in the final year examinations are also eligible to apply. They, however, need to produce final P.G. degree certificate at the time of interview.  
(ii) सभी उपरोक्त पद विद्युद् रूप से अस्थायी हैं। / All the above positions are on purely temporary basis only.

**आय सीमा/Age limit:** अभावधनपत्र की प्राप्ति के लिए निर्धारित अंतिम तारीख तक 28 वर्ष से कम होनी चाहिए (अनुसूचित जाति/अनुसूचित जनजाति के उम्मीदवारों के संदर्भ में पांच वर्ष एवं अन्य पिछड़े वर्ग के लिए तीन वर्ष की छूट होगी)। भूतपूर्व सैनिक और दिव्यांगजन उम्मीदवार भारत सरकार के आदेशों के अनुसार आय सीमा में छूट के लिए पात्र होंगे। / Less than 28 years as on the last date fixed for receipt of applications (relaxation of five years in the case of SC/ST candidates and three years for OBC candidates), Ex-Servicemen and Persons With Disabilities are eligible for age relaxation as per Govt. of India orders.

**आवेदन की तिथि/How to Apply:** आवेदन पत्र को एनएआरएल वेबसाइट ([www.narl.gov.in](http://www.narl.gov.in)) में लॉग-इन करके भरना चाहिए। ऑनलाइन आवेदन प्रस्तुत करने के लिए साइट 28.03.2020 (10:00 बजे) से 27.04.2020 (17:30 बजे) तक खुला रहेगा। / Applications should be filled by logging into NARL Web-site ([www.narl.gov.in](http://www.narl.gov.in)). The site will remain open from 28.03.2020 (10:00 Hrs) to 27.04.2020 (17:30 Hrs) for submission of online application.

**सूचना/Note:** आवेदनपत्र, सामान्य शर्तें एवं अन्य अनुदेश के लिए, कृपया हमारा वेबसाइट [www.narl.gov.in](http://www.narl.gov.in) को देखें। / For application form, general conditions and other instructions, please refer to our website ([www.narl.gov.in](http://www.narl.gov.in)).

**02. पोस्ट डॉक्टोरल फेलो (पीडीएफ) / रिसर्च एसोसिएट (आरए) के पद:**  
**02. Post Doctoral Fellow (PDF) / Research Associate (RA) positions.**

एनएआरएल वायुमंडलीय एवं अंतरिक्ष विज्ञान, मौसम विज्ञान, फोटॉनिक्स, यंत्रिकी और संचालन संसाधन में पोस्ट-डॉक्टोरल अनुसंधान करने का अवसर प्रदान करता है। एनएआरएल द्वारा पूरे वर्ष के दौरान (पीडीएफ)/(आरए) पदों के लिए आवेदन स्वीकार किये जाते हैं। इच्छुक उम्मीदवार अधिक जानकारी के लिए एनएआरएल के वेबसाइट [www.narl.gov.in](http://www.narl.gov.in) को देख सकते हैं और आवेदन कर सकते हैं। NARL provides opportunity to carry out post-doctoral research in atmospheric and space sciences, meteorology, modelling, instrumentation and signal processing. NARL accepts applications for PDF/RA positions throughout the year. Interested candidates may visit the website [www.narl.gov.in](http://www.narl.gov.in) for more details and apply.

**OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR  
UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) TRIBUNAL  
HIGH COURT OF MEGHALAYA: SHILLONG-793001**

RE: Notification No. S.O. 4132(E) dated 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2019. issued by the Central Government, under Section 3 (1) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. declaring the Hynniewtre National Liberation Council as an unlawful association, read with Notification No. S.O. 797(E) dated 21<sup>st</sup> February 2020.

To,  
**Hynniewtre National Liberation Council of Meghalaya.**

WHEREAS the Central Government, in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (37 of 1967) (hereinafter referred to as the 'Act') has declared Hynniewtre National Liberation Council of Meghalaya to be an 'unlawful association' vide Notification No. S.O. 4132 (E) dated 16th November, 2019 [published in the Gazette of India Extraordinary Part II, Section 3, Sub-section (ii)].

AND WHEREAS by Gazette Notification No. S.O. 797 (E) dated 21<sup>st</sup> February 2020 [published in the Gazette of India Extraordinary Part II, Section 3, Sub-section (ii)], in exercise of powers under sub-section (1) of Section 5 of the Act, the Central Government has constituted a Tribunal comprising Hon'ble Mr. Justice H.S. Thangkhiew, Judge of the High Court of Meghalaya for adjudicating whether or not there is sufficient cause for declaring Hynniewtre National Liberation Council of Meghalaya as an Unlawful Association as required under sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the said Act.

NOW THEREFORE, a notice is hereby given under sub-section (2) of Section 4 of the Act and you are hereby called upon to show cause, within 30 (thirty) days from the date of service of this notice, as to why your Association, declared as Unlawful, be not adjudicated to be so and why an order confirming such declaration be not made under Section 4 (3) of the Act.

The objections/reply, if any, may be filed/ delivered within 30 (thirty) days from the date of service of notice to the undersigned at his office in Joint Registrar (Judl.), High Court of Meghalaya, Shillong-793001. In case the objection/ reply and the documents are in regional language, true English translation thereof be also attached.

You may appear through a duly authorized person before the Tribunal on **25<sup>th</sup> April 2020 at 03:00 P.M in Conference Hall, Hotel Pine Wood, Shillong-793001** for further proceedings.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal, High Court of Meghalaya, Shillong this the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

Sd/-  
**(Shri. Albert W. Lanong, MJS)**  
**Registrar,  
Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal**

# 4 THE OUTBREAK THE CITY

## ANOTHER SUSPECTED COVID-19 DEATH

# Preparing for spike, Delhi panel relies on Wuhan data for strategy

**ASTHA SAXENA**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

A 60-YEAR-OLD Yemeni national who was admitted to a private hospital in Delhi Monday is suspected to have died due to COVID-19, doctors said, after his test results came back Thursday. Doctors added that he had comorbid conditions.

"He died soon after he reached the hospital. Since he had a travel history, he was treated as a suspected case of COVID-19 and samples were collected. The report came back positive on Thursday," said the official. Delhi's first death was reported on March

13 — of a 68-year-old woman from West Delhi.

Meanwhile, a five-member committee, formed by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to chalk out a strategy for COVID-19, has submitted a report factoring in three scenarios: Hundred cases a day in Stage 1; 500 in Stage 2; and 1,000 in Stage 3.

The calculations are based on a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine on February 28. The study, called 'Early Transmission Dynamics in Wuhan, China, of Novel Coronavirus-Infected Pneumonia', was conducted by a group of researchers to analyse the data on the first 425 confirmed cases.

"The calculations are based on this study from Wuhan. If there are 1,000 patients, then 14% will require hospitalisation because of severe infections; about 5% will require an ICU set-up; 2.3% might require ventilator support; and 1.4% might succumb to the disease," said Dr S K Sarin, head of the committee and chief of the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS).

The committee submitted the report to the government on Friday, suggesting that existing facilities be assessed and gaps be filled. "With this background, if you have 100 cases a day, the calculations will be automatically 1/10th of the numbers suggested

in the study. This is for one day, but those who are ventilated or are on ICU may require to stay for at least seven days or longer. So whatever number we get, we will multiply with seven. So if you get 1,000 cases in a day, which is the worst-case scenario, then you have 140 patients hospitalised and you have to multiply it by seven. So you need almost 700 beds at a time because people will stay for seven days. On this basis, we have calculated the number of ventilators, isolation beds and what all needs to be done to build the existing facilities" he said.

The committee said the government needs to stay prepared for all three stages. "As of now, we

have enough beds, ventilators and healthcare workers to meet the demands required at Stage 1. For Stage 2, we have suggested that two hospitals — Lok Nayak and Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital — will, by and large, take care of the COVID-19 patients. Each hospital has 50 ventilators and 200 isolation beds. Apart from this, private hospitals with more than 100 beds will have to earmark four beds for confirmed COVID-19 patients and 10 for the suspected cases," he said.

Meanwhile, a 33-year-old man from Uttam Nagar with a travel history tested positive on Friday, taking the total number of confirmed cases in Delhi to 40.

## As pvt labs begin testing, worker safety is priority

**SOMYA LAKHANI & ASHNA BUTANI**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

IT TOOK over 24 hours for a consignment of testing kits to reach Delhi's Dr Lal PathLabs from Pune Thursday. As private labs begin testing for coronavirus, the 21-day lockdown is one of many problems they are facing.

Managing Director Dr Arvind Lal said, "There was a major transportation issue, so we had to bring the kits from Pune to Mumbai via road on Thursday, after which a cargo plane flew it to Delhi. There is anyway a shortage of testing kits but we are hopeful of this getting sorted soon."

In Delhi, other private labs such as Dr Dangs, Indraprastha Apollo and Max too have been told to test for coronavirus. The test is priced at Rs 4,500, and both Dr Dangs and Dr Lal PathLabs are doing home collections.

Sangeeta Reddy, joint managing director of Apollo Hospitals group, said, "The full infrastructure and full-scale testing is expected to begin by March-end. There will be a provision for home collection of samples as well as drive-through testing." Testing has begun at the Saket branch of Max Lab, while a COVID-19 ward is ready at the Patparganj one.

Dr Arjun Dang, CEO of Dr Dangs Labs, said that as per ICMR guidelines, patients have to show three documents — a doctor's prescription for COVID-19 testing and the doctor's registration number; a government photo-ID such as Aadhaar card; and a pa-

**CORONA COUNT DELHI-NCR**

75 CASES	2 DEATHS
21 RECOVERED	

tient proforma request form.

"A patient can book (for testing) via our website; we also have a special customer care number for this. The sample will be collected from your home," he said.

"There is a dearth of testing kits as well as personal protective equipment (PPE) kits. We have procured 800-1,000 PPE kits and have placed an order for more," said Dr Dang. He said that the lab has cars equipped with temperature loggers and cold chain maintenance devices. "We have been getting at least 300 requests daily. We give a turnaround time of 24 hours for the reports to be generated. We won't do any COVID-19 sample collection at the central lab because of chance of exposure," he said.

Dr Dang emphasised the need for PPE kits in the market because if a family of four wants to get tested, the person doing the test "must change the PPE four times".

Dr Lal said staff doing home collections has to be extra careful and that "the government must ensure we are supplied enough PPE kits." In Gurgaon, SRL Limited, a private lab, started testing on March 26. "Home facilities have not started but people can get tested at the labs. Results will be available in 24 hours," said an official.



At Ghazipur border Friday, Praveen Khanna

## Police issue fresh order for e-retailers

New Delhi: Clearing confusion on whether e-retailers can function during the 21-day lockdown, the Delhi Police chief Friday issued an order approving delivery of food, groceries and medicines in the city. According to police, the order is in compliance with guidelines given by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The MHA has said that while the country needs to be in 'lockdown', supply and storage of essential goods including health infrastructure and food must be allowed.

## Let riot victims stay at govt night shelters: HC

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court Friday directed the Delhi government to ensure that all riot victims who may be shelterless be provided accommodation either at community centres or night shelters operated by DUSIB in Northeast Delhi. The court also directed authorities to provide proper food, sanitation and security for people at the Mustafabad Eidgah relief camp.

## Woman under quarantine goes to Punjab

Faridabad: A Faridabad resident placed on home quarantine purportedly left her house and travelled to her parents' home in Jalandhar. According to officials, the woman had returned from Germany on March 17, along with her three-year-old son and had been placed in home quarantine. "A team from BK Hospital had placed a poster alerting neighbours that she was under quarantine. However, on March 19, it appears she left with her father in a car to Jalandhar. We have alerted our counterparts at the Basti Bawa Khel Jalandhar police station," said Faridabad Police PRO Sube Singh. Meanwhile, landlords and home owners in Gurgaon were warned that harassment of medical staff involved in treatment of coronavirus, labourers, and people under precautionary home quarantine, will lead to an FIR. **ENS**

**SUKRITABARUAH**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

"KHAANA AAYA hai!" shouted a voice at 12:15 pm. Immediately, well over a thousand men scrambled to the main road and sat in closely packed lines on either side of the divider, waiting expectantly. Every day since the capital has shut down, thousands of migrant labourers, who now find themselves without any work or income, sit by the Yamuna Pushta near the Nigambodh Ghat through the day, waiting to be fed by the government night shelters — or anyone else.

The area has a line of six Delhi government-run night shelters. However, their capacity to house them is limited.

"Our regular capacity across these shelters was 700. But now because we're trying to prevent crowding inside, it has been cut down to 300. We have provided the rest of the bedding for people to sleep on the path outside. Around 3,000 people sleep outside every night," said a member of the shelter management.

Large numbers of men sleep on the pavements by the Pushta regularly, but before the lockdown, they used to go seek work at labour chowks across the city or ride rickshaws during the day, to earn for their meals. Now their days revolve around waiting for their stomachs to be filled.



People sit by the Yamuna Pushta near Nigambodh Ghat, waiting for food. Tashi Tobgyal

"We get one roti each in the morning at around 7 am because people from the Sis Ganj Gurdwara come to distribute food. Then, the rest of the day, different charitable people come and give food. Some feed 15, some feed 20. Everyone here is just waiting for their turn," said Gajraj (40), a labourer from Madhya Pradesh, who has not earned in a week.

The shelter management prepares dal-rice and khichri meals

for lunch and dinner as per government directives. It is preparing food with 2.5 quintals rice, 1 quintal dal, 15 kg of soya chunks and 75 kg of potatoes per meal, but even that is falling short for the hungry crowd outside.

At 12:15 pm, a white van drove by and stopped near the shelters. It was carrying food donated by the Delhi Hindustani Mercantile Association. As a gloved and masked man handed out packets of rice and vegetable

curry to those lined up on the dividers, a large number of men swarmed up to him to grab a packet. Police personnel supervising the operation dispersed the crowd by hitting them with lathis.

"This is what people have been reduced to — fighting for food. If volunteers distribute food, there's a chance we may get it. If they just leave it here, one can't imagine the chaos that will ensue," said Amit Kumar, a 38-year-old labourer from Bulandshahr.

Conversation of death is constant by the pushta. "Hunger is far more dangerous to us poor than the coronavirus because it is likely to kill us first. The government might have tried to do something for the public good but there should have been a system. And if it's the virus they are concerned about, have they tried to at least provide masks to those who are sitting outside like this every day?," asked Beer (19), whose village is in Mathura.

## Social distancing inside shelter but cramped outside

**AMIL BHATNAGAR**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

IT'S 12.30 am on Friday and Shehzad, a rickshaw puller, huddles around a fire with five others outside the Yamuna Pushta government shelter home in Kashmir Gate. "We have been told there is a lockdown because of a disease. I am not educated enough but I know it's dangerous and it spreads through contact. But there is not much I can do because we have nowhere to go and have to come here for food. We are at god's mercy," he said, getting closer to the fire as the mercury dipped.

At this DUSIB shelter home near Nigambodh Ghat, scores of people sleep outside two cabins. One cabin can house around 50 people, but tonight, staff said, at

least 5,000 people had sought shelter. For those sleeping inside the cabin, mattresses were provided.

"We do our best to tell people that they should maintain some distance from each other. But there are logistical problems. If we begin spacing the beds, then fewer people will get to sleep inside. Even those sleeping outside have placed their sheets close to each other because there is little space on the footpath. Some even sleep close to the pipeline near the Ghat," said Uday Yadav, manager of the shelter home.

According to staff, approximately 2,000 more people have sought shelter since the lockdown was announced two days ago.

At 2 am, a truck arrives at the shelter with raw material for the 7 am meal the next morning.



On the road outside a shelter home. Tashi Tobgyal

Food at the shelter is provided four times a day. The shelter manager uses a loudspeaker during the day to make announcements about instructions and medical

advice, among other things. A general shortage of hygiene material remains a concern. "There are several families in the area that come during the day

and give out fruits and snacks. Plus the government supply is constant and sufficient. But apart from that, we need soap, sanitiser and masks since the risk of infection is very high in these areas," said Yadav.

While staff members have a 10-hour shift, many have been working for 18 hours since the outbreak.

At the Kashmir Gate stretch, several people with bags are seen walking towards the UP border. Among them is Rakesh, a labourer from Meerut, who decided to halt for the night at the shelter home.

"There is food and shelter here so I can sustain myself. We are getting news from people that the government might do something. If they don't, I will walk back. I cannot be concerned about the disease right now," he said.



At the Delhi-UP border in Noida, Friday. Abhinav Saha

## Noida records 3 more cases, 2 in Ghaziabad

**AMIL BHATNAGAR**  
NOIDA, MARCH 27

THREE PERSONS in Noida and two in Ghaziabad tested positive for coronavirus Friday. Till Friday evening, Noida had 18 cases, the highest in UP, while Ghaziabad has five cases.

Officials said four cases so far have been linked to a Noida fire safety firm that was visited by a British national for an audit earlier this month. Two employees of the same firm tested positive earlier this week. The office has been closed for sanitisation.

A 55-year-old woman and her 33-year-old daughter-in-law, residents of Noida Sector 137, are among those who tested positive. One of their family members works at the Noida firm. Officials said the family member's sample was negative and suspect he may have acted as a carrier.

Another patient, a 36-year-old resident of Greater Noida who works in the same company, is

believed to have been in direct contact with the British national.

"The woman and her daughter-in-law tested positive. The source of infection can be traced to the firm. The third positive patient is also an employee at the same firm. Two other persons have checked at a private lab, we are cross-checking those samples," said CMO Dr Anurag Bhargava. The administration has sealed the societies where the patients live in Sector 137 and Greater Noida's Omicron 1.

Sources said the two Ghaziabad residents who went to a private lab tested positive. The district health department will send their samples to the government testing centre for a confirm, said officials. "One of the patients has a travel history to Dubai. The other patient came in contact with officials in the Noida firm. Both have been admitted at isolation wards," said Ghaziabad CMO Narendra Gupta.

Three people, meanwhile, have recovered in Ghaziabad.

## ANAND PARBAT TRANSIT CAMP

# Street artists say lockdown means zero business, many now begging

**ANAND MOHAN J**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

ISHAMUDDIN KHAN, a street magician, is out of tricks. For him and several street artists at the Anand Parbat Transit Camp, where around 2,800 families from Kathputli Colony live, the coronavirus outbreak and the subsequent lockdown has hit hard.

The families were shifted out of the colony over the course of three years since 2014. The last

time they earned some money was several months ago. Many artists were waiting for the summer to find work. Instead, they face a 21-day lockdown.

A resident of the transit camp The Indian Express spoke to said their ration is fast depleting and many are now having to beg for money.

Khan, who runs the Indian Street Performers Association Trust, said, "Many artists had already taken up assignments in Himachal Pradesh and Mumbai. They are now

stranded there and we have no contact with them. After our colony was demolished, we thought it was the worst thing that could happen. But worse things are yet to come."

Puppeteer Vicky Bhatt stays in a one-room house with five other family members at the transit camp. His last assignment was two months ago for which he earned Rs 5,000. With prices of milk and groceries shooting up in his neighbourhood, he does not know how long his family will manage on



dwindling ration. "We live our lives on a day-to-day basis. Now, we are forced to beg for Rs 100 and Rs 50," said Vicky.

Acrobat Mukesh Nat's last job was at the Hunar Haat at India Gate in February, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made a surprise visit. He earned Rs 1,000 for 10 days of work and has now run out of

**Around 2,800 families from Kathputli Colony live in the transit camp. Archive**

money. He could not manage to get a house in Anand Parbat and now stays with 13 members of his family inside a two-room house. He dipped into his savings to buy 4 kg rice and 1 kg dal. "My mother is paralysed and I just have five days of medicines left for her. I fear if I step out of my house, police will beat me," said Nat.

Vijay Maitri, a theater artist, was looking forward to a film screening in Paris. It was a documentary on the Kathputli

Colony demolition. Vijay has now been going around the camp spreading awareness about the virus. "December to March is our main season; all our contracts are now cancelled. We used to have food carts inside the camp. Now, we are trying to pool our resources to feed the 2,800 families," he said.

Another puppeteer, Vijay Bhatt, has been without work since January. "We are seven members of a family. I only have 2 kg of atta left," he said.

# 5 THE OUTBREAK NATION

## CABINET SECY WRITES TO STATES

# Gap in number of arrivals, those under watch flagged

ABANTIKA GHOSH  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

CABINET SECRETARY Rajiv Gauba, in a letter to chief secretaries, has flagged the gaps in the numbers of people being monitored by state governments and the numbers of people who arrived in India till March 23. India, meanwhile, has announced that it will participate in a global drug trial anchored by WHO that is looking for a medicine against the disease.

In his letter to the states, Gauba wrote, "We initiated screening of international incoming passengers at the airports with effect from 18th January 2020. I have been informed that upto 23rd March 2020, cumulatively, Bureau of Immigration has shared details of more than 15 lakh incoming international passengers with the states/UTs for monitoring for COVID-19. However, there appears to be a gap between the number of international passengers who need to be monitored by the states/UTs and the actual number of passengers being monitored. This may seriously jeopardise our efforts to contain COVID-19, given that many amongst the persons who have tested positive for COVID-19 so far in India have history of international travel."

This gap in monitoring, officials say, could mean that a possible infection source has escaped the government net and is out in the open, potentially infecting many others. Though they are reluctant to use the phrase, this is classically how community transmission begins.

A total of 1.4 lakh companies have allowed employees to work from home and the government has reached out to PSUs for 40,000 ventilators. "One PSU has



People wait for the arrival of a vehicle to carry gas cylinders in Lucknow. Vishal Srivastava

been asked to make 10,000 ventilators, another 30,000 will come from Bharat Electricals, a PSU under the defence ministry," said Lav Agarwal, joint secretary in the Ministry of Health. The Home Ministry has reiterated its message to states, asking them to take care of migrant labourers. "States have been asked to take care of the needs of migrant labourers so that they stay where they are... They have also been asked to maintain cargo movement," said Punya Salia Srivasatava, joint secretary, Ministry of Health.

India, meanwhile, has decided to participate in a global drug trial anchored by the World Health Organization to look for a medicine against COVID-19. The trial, called SOLIDARITY trial, will test the antiviral drug remdesivir — a combination of HIV drugs lopinavir and ritonavir; lopinavir and ritonavir plus interferon beta; and the antimalarial drug

chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine. Interferons are compounds crucial to generating an immune response in the body. Dr RR Gangakhedkar, head of epidemiology and infectious diseases at ICMR, said on Friday, "We have decided to participate in the SOLIDARITY trial. Earlier we did not have enough patients but now that we do, we will be a part of the global trials."

So far, Argentina, Bahrain, Canada, France, Iran, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland and Thailand have signed up for the trial.

Dr Gangakhedkar also said India is in the process of procuring 3.4 million more probes for testing and there should not be any concerns on that count. He also clarified that India is trying to get test kits from everywhere, including China, but the 7 lakh serological testing kits being procured have "limited application in the

future". "It will give results only after a few days of infection," he said.

In an early morning notification, the Ministry of Health put hydroxychloroquine — a drug recommended by ICMR for use in health workers and caregivers in direct contact with a COVID-2019 patient — on Schedule H1 of the drugs and cosmetics act. This means that the drug cannot be sold without a valid prescription and with a box label that using it without consulting a doctor can be dangerous. In addition, patients need to maintain a separate register on the sale of these drugs.

In a statement, ICMR said: "A total of 27,688 samples from 26,798 individuals have been tested for SARS-CoV2 as on 27th March 2020 9:00 AM IST. A total of 691 individuals have been confirmed positive among suspected cases and contacts of known positive cases."

# Shah discusses migrant movement with CMs, asks states to help them

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

IN WAKE of disrupted essential supplies and scores of migrant workers moving to their native places on foot following the nationwide lockdown, Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday held a video-conferencing with chief ministers of various states.

Shah is learnt to have discussed the prevailing situation over COVID-19 and the issues associated with the lockdown. Shah, sources said, asked them to sort out issues with essential supplies and provide help to migrant workers.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Friday issued an advisory to all states to ensure accommodation and food for out-of-work migrant labour so that they do not move across states. Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla has written to chief secretaries of all states to rope in NGOs and other such organisations to provide food and shelter to such people.

Bhalla has also asked them to keep hotels and hostels functional so that students do not move across borders, and the objective of social distancing to contain COVID-19 is sustained.

The ministry said in a statement: "The Union Home Secretary has written to all States/UTs to take immediate steps to provide adequate support, including food and shelter, to migrant agricultural labourers, industrial workers and other unorganised sector workers during the 21-day Nationwide COVID-19 lockdown. Similarly, States/UTs have been advised to take steps to ensure that students, working women hostel inmates etc. are allowed to continue in existing facilities, while observing precautions."



Amit Shah

existing accommodation."

An MHA official said, "This massive movement of people defeats the whole purpose of a lockdown. It is difficult to even track down their movement completely. It has to be stopped. The last thing the government wants to handle is spread of infections in rural areas. But their problems are genuine, and they have to be facilitated by states."

The advisory suggests that in order to mitigate the situation, states/UTs need to explore measures by involving various agencies, including NGOs, to provide food and shelter with basic amenities like clean drinking water, sanitation etc.

The MHA also stated: "States/UTs have also been advised to make these vulnerable groups aware of the measures taken by the Government including provision of free food grains and other essential items through PDS, and streamline the distribution system..."

The advisory has asked states to ensure hotels, rented accommodation and hostels remain functional "so that students, working women hostel inmates etc. are allowed to continue in existing facilities, while observing precautions."

# Yogi urges UP residents in other states: Stay where you are

MAULSHREE SETH  
LUCKNOW, MARCH 27

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday appealed to people belonging to Uttar Pradesh living in other states not to come to the state, amid a 21-day nationwide lockdown announced by the Centre to curb the spread of coronavirus. Adityanath also spoke to Chief Ministers of other states, requesting them to make arrangements for people from UP in their respective states, assuring them that UP would bear the cost of arrangement made for their stay and food.

"I spoke to Chief Ministers of Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Haryana and made a personal request that all those people from Uttar Pradesh, who are staying there should stay there and requested these states to make arrangements for them. We have also communicated that the Uttar Pradesh government is ready to bear the cost of all these arrangements," said Adityanath. He added that the Chief Ministers of other states "responded positively."

"It is my appeal to all the residents of Uttar Pradesh, who are living here or in other states to remain wherever they are. The government will take care of all their needs." Making a special appeal to labourers walking down to their respective villages, the CM said, "To our labourers, who are walking on foot... Do not do this. Disease can also travel with you."

He said the state Chief Secretary has also written to Chief Secretaries of other states asking them to make arrangements for stay of people from Uttar Pradesh in their states. The CM said that while the Uttar Pradesh government would bear all the costs incurred on stay and food of people belonging to UP.



People line up to buy vegetables in Guwahati on Friday. Dasarath Deka

## UTTARAKHAND No more than 15 people at funerals

Dehradun: The Uttarakhand Police has restricted the number of people allowed in funerals to 15 and said it would provide vehicles and issue passes for them to reach the cremation grounds during the 21-day lockdown period. The cap on the number of people participating in cremation or burial is in accordance with social distancing norms, SP (City) Shweta Choubey said. PTI

## MAHARASHTRA Three held for misleading audio clip

Nagpur: The Nagpur Police has arrested three persons for making and circulating a audio clip that falsely claimed that the city had 59 positive coronavirus cases. "Omprakash Gupta, Ajit Shivpal Pardhi and Divyanshu Ramvilas Mishra were arrested on Thursday night," Joint Commissioner of Police Ravindra Kadam said on Friday. "Our cyber cell tracked over 400 telephone numbers to trace the culprits. They are all highly educated. Gupta is a MBA, Pardhi is an engineer and Mishra is a computer engineer and a finance manager in a private company." ENS

## ANDHRA NRIs booked for violating quarantine

Machilipatnam: Two NRIs who returned from the US earlier this month have been booked for allegedly violating home quarantine directives in Krishna district, police said Friday. Both had been instructed by district officials to remain under home quarantine after their arrival in Velvadam village on March 14. However, they were found moving around in public places on Thursday. PTI

# ICMR guidelines for antibody kits: Not recommended for diagnosis

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

THE INDIAN Council of Medical Research (ICMR), which has approved twelve antibody kits, on Friday issued guidelines on the use of these kits for testing for COVID-19, stating that the test "is not recommended for diagnosis" and that positive test would only "indicate" an exposure to the coronavirus.

The six guidelines issued by ICMR on the rapid antibody kits state that the test can be done on blood/serum/plasma; the test result is available within 30 minutes; test comes positive after 7-10 days of infection; the test is not recommended for diagnosis of COVID-19 infection; positive test indicates exposure to SARS-CoV-2; and a negative test does not rule out COVID-19 infection.

The Indian Express on March 26 had reported about the limitation of the serological test — that it can only be used for screening, and that patients will have to undergo the RTPCR test for diagnosis of COVID-19 infection.

"The advantage is that the antibody test is very simple. Just a



People carry essential items in Shimla on Day 3 of the nationwide lockdown. Pradeep Kumar

drop of blood is required and the results will be available in just one-two hours. Some kits require whole blood and some kits require blood to be centrifuged. However, one needs to remember that is not a test that will definitely tell you that a person is infected with COVID-19 infection. It is only for screening," Dr V Ravi, Head and Senior Professor, Department of Neurovirology, NIMHANS had told The Indian Express.

Dr Ravi had said the serological test will only help screen more

number of suspected patients in a shorter duration but is not aimed to be a tool for mass testing.

"A positive test in the antibody will tell you that you have been exposed to the virus; and a negative test does not rule out COVID-19 infection, especially if it is very early after exposure. The reliability of such a test, in general, is seven days after the virus has entered the human body. The kit will clearly say what is the probability and at which point it is definite," Dr Ravi had said.

# Friday prayers suspended as Valley sees four new cases

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, MARCH 27

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYERS have been suspended across Kashmir, even as the Valley reported four fresh coronavirus cases on Friday, authorities said.

In Srinagar, muezzins immediately followed the call for prayer with an appeal to offer namaz at home. Kashmir's Grand Mufti Nasirul Islam told The Indian Express on Thursday: "My appeal to people to including Imams, and bodies of all masjids and shrines across valley is not to hold or organise Friday congregational prayers."

In a bulletin issued Friday, the administration said over 5,700 travellers and people in contact with suspected cases have been put under surveillance. So far, 18 people have tested positive in J&K.

All four new cases were reported from Srinagar district. "Two have travel history abroad, the other two have a travel history outside J&K as part of religious congregations," said Rohit Kansal, J&K administration spokesperson.

# Oppn asks govt to help stranded migrants with transportation, food

MANOJ CG  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

WITH THOUSANDS of out-of-work daily wagers stranded away from home at various places across the country due to the lockdown, opposition parties on Friday mounted pressure on the Centre as well as state governments to step in urgently and help them reach their villages or open temporary shelters with adequate supply of food for them.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asking him to intervene. She argued that lakhs of migrant workers are being forced to walk hundreds of miles as there is no public transport available and that several others are stuck in guest houses or hotels and have run out of money to pay their costs.

Arguing that the lockdown is beginning to have a detrimental effect on thousands of such people, she asked him to issue a "national advisory" to assist those who are trapped in transit.

In her letter — the third to the Prime Minister this week — Gandhi wrote, "I am taking the

liberty to suggest two measures. One-time state transport services be made available to those who are walking to their home towns or villages (and) district collectors to extend all possible assistance to those who can no longer afford to stay in lodges or guest houses."

AICC general secretary in-charge of UP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra wrote to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, urging his government to take steps to help the stranded workers.

"Workers from Uttar Pradesh travel to distant areas to earn their livelihood. Today they are in dire straits after the lockdown. I request you to take steps to help those stranded workers reach home... If a large number of people are stuck on the roads, government schools and colleges can be opened to provide them shelter..." she said.

She also asked him to speak to his counterparts in other states and work in cooperation with them to guarantee them work security.

Senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel too asked the Central government to "issue a directive to enable one-time train/bus serv-

ice" to help the stranded reach home. "If we can evacuate Indians stranded in foreign soil why not assist those stranded on domestic soil?" he said.

CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury said, "Lakhs are already on the roads having left their workplace. Centre must establish camps with assured food supplies of food and other needs. Or, arrange transportation to their homes. Unless done we cannot contain community spread of COVID-19. The Centre has obviously not thought through the lockdown, which has been announced abruptly. The biggest uprooting of lives of India's most marginalised must be prevented by the Centre. Transport them to safety; cannot simply deflect responsibility to states."

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav asked the UP government to order district authorities to distribute food packets to those stranded on the roads. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has written to her counterparts of 18 states to arrange for basic shelter, food and medical support from workers from her state stranded in these states.

# Stranded pilgrims in Iran: SC seeks status report from Centre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

THE SUPREME Court on Friday sought a status report from the Centre on measures it has taken or proposes "to alleviate the hardship...faced" by a group of Muslim pilgrims from India who are stranded in Iran, and of whom about 250 have been tested positive for the coronavirus.

A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and Surya Kant, which heard the plea via video-conferencing, issued notice to the Centre.

It said "the contents of the petition under Article 32 of the Constitution indicate that there is an urgent need for humanitarian assistance to be provided to

Indian citizens who are stranded in Qom".

The bench asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to place the status report before it and to assist the court.

"We hope and trust that in the meantime all necessary steps that are required to protect the welfare of these citizens will be adopted and a suitable plan of action will be chalked out in consultation with all the concerned authorities, including the Indian Embassy in Iran."

The court was hearing a plea by a Ladakh resident Mustafa MH who said that his relatives who were part of the group of pilgrims were stuck in the city of Qom and urged the court to direct the government to do the needful to evacuate them.

Appearing for the petitioner, Senior Advocate Sanjay Hegde said those stranded were part of a group of people who had left for the three-month pilgrimage in December 2019. They were scheduled to return in batches. Majority of the rest were to return on March 6 but could not leave because of the coronavirus.

The petition said the Centre had evacuated around 389 people, including students from Iran and a team of doctors had conducted tests on about 850.

It added that "the pilgrims include old aged persons, who suffer from ailments... and require regular medical care" but were not getting proper medication due to the prevailing situation.

# Goans rush out as govt eases lockdown, doctors fret

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
PANAJI, MARCH 27

EGGS WERE selling for Rs 84 a dozen in Panaji, and vegetable and fish stocks ran dry by 9 am Friday at villages as desperate Goans trooped out after government relaxed the five-day lockdown by allowing grocery and fish shops to open.

Parallel to this, a set of videos and open letters emerged through the early hours — with medical practitioners calling the dilution of lockdown a "gateway for the virus to spread". Both these narratives played at the High Court of Bombay bench in Goa which was hearing a bunch of petitions.

Justice Mahesh Sonak asked for a "robust system" to be placed saying people are not in the interest of defying curfew but expect their government to provide them with essentials in a well thought

and organised manner. "Even the directives of the National Disaster Management Authority and the Government of India propose encouragement to home deliveries. The state government and its agencies must be proactive in encouraging and facilitating home deliveries of essentials, so that, there is no need to visit grocery shops during the period of lockdown," Sonak said, adding, "The decision to permit grocery shops to remain open, should not be construed as dilution of the earlier resolve to put a system of home deliveries of essentials in place, so that there is no necessity for people to access grocery shops personally and thereby dilute the lockout."

Sonak also came down heavily on the government decisions in the last five days, saying the importance of social distancing can never be compromised.

Early morning, the concerns

# Goa IMA president Dr Samuel Arawattigi said the biggest hurdle the Goan health system faces is lack of masks and sanitisers

played out in the queues.

"I have old parents at home, and neighbours who are senior citizens. I took a purchase list and reached Bastora junction early at 6, only to find everything was over. Then a round at Aldonha and Mapusa too didn't yield anything. When I reached the grocery stores, the queue at 7 am was so long and unorganised that I felt it best to return empty-handed than risk infection," said Engelbert D'Mello, 43-year-old Bastora native who stepped out after home delivery numbers didn't yield re-

sult. With 3 having tested positive for corona infection, and 1043 in different quarantines and isolation spaces since January 29, doctors fear an uptick in numbers as Covid-19 test kits and trained staff have arrived for sample testing that will begin on Saturday.

Goa now has a 100-bed facility with the government placing order for 70 more ventilators to make it 100 ventilators for public hospitals. 24 private hospitals have also kept a section of their hospitals ready with 40 ventilators between them.

"We are now starting afresh. People have mingled and the fruits of the last five-day lockdown now means nothing," said Dr Shekar Shelkar, the former president of IMA, and now running the COVID-19 programme in Manipal Hospital.

"The next eight days are very very crucial. One of the patient

who tested positive came to Goa on March 18, and we had taken March 28-29 as the first cycle, based on our reading of the reports from across other states and world on the manner in which the virus acted. We were also looking at an earlier deadline of March 31, based on that," added Shelkar. "Now with Friday's crowding we are back to square one."

Goa IMA president Dr Samuel Arawattigi said the biggest hurdle the Goan health system faces is lack of masks and sanitisers. He was at INS Hansa Naval base to receive the 60,000 face masks that the Indian Navy's maritime reconnaissance aircraft ferried for the health staff.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant asked Goans not to step out of their homes or hide travel history. "I foresee a very huge and scary scenario. I know what is going to happen... God willing it should not happen," he said



## CORONA WATCH



Policiemen in Jaipur being screened on Friday. Rohit Jain Paras

## TAMIL NADU

## Six new cases, count at 35

Chennai: Six new coronavirus cases were reported in Tamil Nadu on Friday. The new cases included two family members of a Madurai man who died of COVID-19 on Wednesday, two people in Erode and another person in Chennai who were in contact with people tested positive earlier, and a 25-year-old woman from Ariyalur, who was working in a shopping mall in Chennai city. The state has a total of 35 cases now, including the person who died on Wednesday and one who was discharged. **ENS**

## UTTARAKHAND

## Forest officer tests negative

Dehradun: A trainee forest officer was discharged from hospital after testing negative for COVID-19 for the second consecutive time on Friday. His two colleagues, who had tested positive earlier, tested negative today. Both will be discharged only when they test negative twice. All three had contracted the disease after returning from Spain. Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat congratulated the medical team that was treating those patients. Uttarakhand now has two other positive cases—one in Dehradun and the other in Kotdwar. **ENS**

## BENGAL

## Five of family test positive

Kolkata: Five members of a family, including three children, tested positive for COVID-19 in West Bengal on Friday, taking the number of such cases in the state to 15, a senior health official said. Among the five are a nine-month-old baby, a six-year-old girl, a 11-year-old boy, and two women aged 27 and 45, he said. The 27-year-old woman had recently visited Delhi, where she came in contact with a person from the UK, the official added. **PTI**



A 150-bed isolation ward is set to open at two floors of the new Sassoon Hospital building in Pune. Arul Horizon

## UP men on long march from Rewari: 'If virus doesn't kill us, journey will'

ASAD REHMAN  
LUCKNOW, MARCH 27

AT 4:15 PM on Friday, the third day of the country-wide lockdown, six young men carrying small backpacks walked on a nearly empty Lohia Path in Lucknow. The men, coming from Rewari in Haryana, covering the 550-plus km partly in packed buses and mostly on foot, and headed for anywhere between 25 and 125 further kilometres, desperately tried to thumb a ride. But no luck.

"We are going to Bahraich and Barabanki—four of us live in Bahraich, the other two in Barabanki," one of them, Pankaj Mishra, 20, from Barabanki's Suratganj, said.

From Lucknow, Barabanki is around 25 km, and Bahraich about 125 km.

Mishra said they started walking from Rewari with 20 other migrant workers soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the countrywide lockdown on Tuesday night. "The others are walking ahead. We need to walk up to Polytechnic



The group is covering the journey mostly on foot.

Chauraha (around 3.5 km). From there, we might get a bus," Mishra said, hopeful.

Mishra works at a thread factory in Rewari for a monthly wage of Rs 7,000. "I had saved up around Rs 3,000 but most of it was spent on food for the few days before the lockdown. The factory was closed more than a week ago," he said, his eyes bloodshot due to the fatigue.

Taking out a packet of glucose biscuits from his bag, Anil Kumar Rawat, 24, said, "What was the point in staying in Haryana? Once we reach home, we can deal with

the situation. Our home must have some grain. We would have starved to death in Rewari."

Another member of the group, Sonu Kumar, 26, said, "We were lathicharged in Haryana and Delhi. After we entered Uttar Pradesh, the policemen have helped us. In Lucknow, we were fed khichdi by some policemen and given water."

About their journey, Sonu said, "We walked from Rewari to a bus stop. From there, we got a lift in a bus up to Delhi. We walked the entire city on foot before getting a lift up to Agra. From there, we

walked to Mathura. We don't even have enough money to buy bus tickets - anyway, bus conductors are refusing to take us."

Agra to Mathura is a distance of around 60 km.

Rawat said, "From Mathura, we came here (Lucknow) - most of the journey has been on foot, the rest by taking lifts."

Sonu added, "If coronavirus doesn't kill us, this journey will. We walked most of the time. I took six painkillers - we take one after eating a whole packet of biscuit."

Two kilometres ahead, at a police picket near Wave mall in Lucknow, a sub-inspector (name withheld on request) said, "We are trying to help them get buses. We have a carton of water pouches and some bananas...if they are hungry, but it is difficult to find buses now."

At Polytechnic intersection, a prominent junction where buses leave for Barabanki, Basti, Ayodhya and other districts, policemen did try to get the group from Rewari get into a bus. But in vain, as the conductor raised an alarm about overcrowding.

## Maharashtra count 153, including 24 of same family

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS, VIVEK DESHPANDE & TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA  
PUNE, NAGPUR, MUMBAI, MARCH 27

WITH 23 new COVID-19 cases reported in Maharashtra, including 12 from Sangli, the total number of people infected in the state rose to 153 on Friday.

Four cases were reported from Nagpur, three from Mumbai, two from Thane and one each from Palghar and Gondia. Among those who tested positive in Mumbai is a one-and-a-half-year old child.

In Sangli's Islampur, after four members of a family tested positive on March 23 after returning from Haj in Saudi Arabia, five other relatives were diagnosed with the infection Wednesday, three on Thursday, and 12 on Friday. With this, 23 members of the family have tested positive. Another person, a relative who visited the family from Peth Wadgaon in Kolhapur, has also tested positive.

"These 12 people are from the same family - 11 from Islampur, and one from Wadgaon had earlier tested positive," Sangli district Civil Surgeon Dr Sanjay Salunkhe said.

The three who tested positive on Wednesday included a girl who had come to meet them from Peth Wadgaon and a woman - a close relative - who helped with domestic chores.

"Initially, we got in touch with 41 people who had come in contact with the family. But the close relative who stayed sepa-

ately also worked in other people's homes. So, now we have traced at least 300 contacts," Salunkhe said.

Meanwhile, five persons tested positive in Vidarbha on Friday. Civil Surgeon D V Paturkar said, "While three of them are family members of the Nagpur man who tested positive on Thursday, one person had come in close contact with him. The fifth one is a man from Gondia."

The Nagpur man, who tested positive on Thursday, had gone to Delhi on March 16 and returned to the city on March 18. He had developed symptoms about three days later.

Divisional Commissioner Sanjiv Kumar said, "We had identified 21 people, who came in contact with him after his return from Delhi." The first man to test positive was discharged Thursday and three of his acquaintances, including his wife, may be discharged on Saturday.

In Gondia, a 24-year-old man has been infected. Gondia Collector Kadambari Balkawde said, "He returned to Gondia from Bangkok on March 16. He had gone there with four others from Chhattisgarh. One of them tested positive in Rajnandgaon. We swung into action Thursday and sent his samples to Nagpur. He has tested positive."

She added, "We have quarantined his four family members. Currently, all are asymptomatic. We are tracking his co-travellers in the train in which he travelled from Raipur to Gondia."

On Friday, 250 people were hospitalised in the state on the suspicion that they were infected. So far, 3,059 people have tested negative for COVID-19 in the state.

## 6 of group that travelled to Delhi, Vizag test positive in Andamans &amp; Nicobar

ESHA ROY  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

IN THE last two days, six COVID-19 positive cases, all part of a 13-member group which travelled to Visakhapatnam and New Delhi, have been reported in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The group had gone to Visakhapatnam by ship in February, and then taken a train to Delhi on March 18. On March 24, six members of the group took a Vistara flight to Port Blair via Kolkata, while another took an Indigo flight.

Dr Avjit Roy, Joint Secretary, Health, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the region's nodal officer for COVID-19 response, said they were taken to an isolation facility on arrival as they showed "mild symptoms".

The other members of the group are yet to return.

"The patients told us that they went to Nizamuddin Dargah in New Delhi to attend a jamaat. On inquiry, we found out that a person who later died in Srinagar had attended this gathering just nine days before this group went there," he said.

Because of its ecological and demographic sensitivity, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands—home to five of India's most "particularly vulnerable tribal groups"—was among the first in the country to lock down.

"We have enough medical supplies and protective gear for the next few weeks, but will need to requisition more after that," said Dr Roy.

"One of the main sources of livelihood on the islands is tourism, and we shut that down

## 3rd COVID-19 casualty in Karnataka took train from Delhi on March 11

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU, MARCH 27

KARNATAKA RECORDED its third COVID-19 death on Friday even as nine fresh cases were reported from the state, taking the total number of cases to 64.

A 60-year-old man from Tumkur region in south Karnataka with a recent history of domestic travel but no foreign travel died at a hospital in Tumkur on Friday morning. He had returned from Delhi by train on March 14, officials said.

"Twenty-four high-risk primary contacts have been traced of which 13 are isolated in a designated hospital. Eight have tested negative and three are healthcare professionals who are house-quarantined," state health secretary Jawaid Akhtar said.

The health authorities have asked passengers who travelled from Delhi on March 11 in the same coach of Kongu Express as the deceased to contact a helpline.

"P-60" travelled on the Kongu Express train from Delhi which departed on March 11 and arrived in Yeshwanthpur on March 14 at 12.30 am. From Yeshwanthpur, he took a KSRTC bus to reach Sira, Tumkur," a health official said.

Among the nine fresh cases reported on Friday are a man who returned from London and a 10-month-old infant.

Among the fresh cases is "P 56", a 10-month-old male child from Dakshina Kannada who has no history of travel to COVID-19 affected countries, a health department official said. "As per preliminary investigation, the child was taken near the Kerala border by family members. Six primary contacts are under quarantine."

Also among the fresh cases are two women - 35-year-old and a 33-year-old - who worked as domestic help at the home of a 51-year-old man in Bengaluru who returned from London on March 13 and tested positive.

## Running out of food, no money left, say stranded migrants from Bengal

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA  
KOLKATA, MARCH 27

STRANDED AWAY from their homes with no aid on the horizon, migrant workers from West Bengal are fast running out of money and food as the nationwide lockdown enters its third day. Many of these migrants, who put up in cramped accommodations, work as construction labourers or hawkers in states like Haryana and Rajasthan.

The Indian Express reached out to several workers in these two states who—caught unprepared by the announcement of a 21-day lockdown for "fighting some disease"—are looking for a way out, and finding none.

Even venturing out to the

market or highway earns them the wrath of the police. Sheikh Moidul, from Kaliachowk in Malda, said over the phone. Moidul, 30, is part of a group of 50 construction workers, including 16 women, which is stranded in Rewari district of Haryana. They used to earn a daily wage of Rs 350 along with food for building a warehouse in the district. The group stays in a makeshift colony with small rooms and two toilets near the construction site.

"Our rice and potato will only last two days. We cannot go to the market which is about 2 kms from here. Whenever we go to the highway, the policemen are beating us with batons. One of our youths who went to the police to ask him to allow us was lathicharged," said Moidul.

Thirty-eight year old Muhammed Shahbaz, from Mothabari in Malda, is among those in the group. He works as a supervisor in Rewari and earns Rs 15,000 a month. "I was a civic volunteer in the district. But the money was not enough to run a family. So I got this job. Now I am regretting. I am yet to get my salary. We don't know what we will eat after two days. We don't know whether we will survive this lockdown," said Shahbaz.

It is a similar story in Rajasthan's Sikar district, where there are nearly 80 Bengali migrants living in different groups. Many of them go door to door selling plastic goods, earning up to 600 everyday.

Mohammed Habibul Sheikh, 35, a resident of Syedpur in Malda,

says he is part of a group of 20 which is crammed into around five 10-by-10 ft rooms.

"We managed to get a bag of rice after begging a local. We have promised to pay him. We also have around two kgs of potatoes left with us. We are about 20 people here. How long do you think that will last," asked the father of five.

"We did not know that shut down will start from Sunday, so we used the money we had in buying the plastic items and thought that we will start work from Monday. But now we have no cash in hand. Prices of items are doubled or tripled in the local market," said 42-year-old Muhammed Ajem a resident of Kaliachowk who went to Rajasthan as recently as March 21.

## RAJASTHAN CASES TOUCH 50

## Another corona patient dies in Bhilwara, officials say not due to virus

HAMID KHAN  
JAIPUR, MARCH 27

A 60-YEAR-OLD in Rajasthan's Bhilwara district, who had tested positive for coronavirus, died late on Thursday night. However, authorities did not attribute his death to the virus, and said he died due to co-morbid conditions, including high blood pressure and a dysfunctional kidney.

According to the state Health Department, the 60-year-old had had a heart attack on March 6 and was taken to a private hospital. From there, he was shifted to another private hospital—which has been identified as the centre of the outbreak in the district.

At this hospital, he was in the ICU from March 7 to 9. He again visited the hospital on March 12 and 19 for consultation. He was then shifted to the government hospital in Bhilwara as a sus-

pected coronavirus patient, and tested positive on March 25.

Health authorities said he died because of co-morbid conditions, including high blood pressure and a dysfunctional kidney.

This was the second death of a coronavirus patient in Bhilwara on Thursday. Earlier, a 73-year-old man, who had been in a coma due to kidney failure, had died, but in his case too, authorities ruled out the coronavirus as being the cause of his death, pointing to his underlying medical conditions.

The number of coronavirus patients in the state reached 50 on Friday after the state recorded seven new cases. The new cases include a 48-year-old man and his 14-year-old son in Dungarpur. Both travelled on a bike from Indore to Dungarpur, reaching the district on Wednesday. They were screened on Thursday and admitted to a hospital. On Friday, their test returned positive.

## Doctor in Tamil Nadu is second Railways person to test positive

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

A DOCTOR in Indian Railways has been found positive for COVID-19 in Tamil Nadu. One of her minor daughters has also been found positive, local officials confirmed.

Colleagues and family members have been placed on quarantine, including her mother, sources said.

This is the second instance of functionaries of the national transporter being found positive. Earlier in the week, a 57-year-old functionary in Eastern Railway, who had been to Bilaspur, succumbed to the disease.

Following the revelation of the case in Tamil Nadu, all premises have been sanitised, sources told *The Indian Express*. "We have followed all the protocol prescribed in the health advisory," said a senior official.

## FROM PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS TO VILLAGE BARRICADES

## How N-E villages are enforcing lockdown

ABHISHEK SAHA  
GUWAHATI, MARCH 27

TWO CASES of COVID-19 infection have been reported so far from the Northeast, a region characterised by remote settlements. To prevent a large-scale outbreak, several village communities have introduced their own ways to enforce the nationwide lockdown.

In Arunachal Pradesh's Lower Dibang Valley and East Siang districts, there are reports that people are sacrificing dogs and hanging the carcasses at the village entrance, believing that they will ward off evil spirits. The district administration has now issued a warning against killing of animals and ordered removal of carcasses.

In Mizoram, the scare has in-



Water and soap at the entrance of Tripura's Boiragi Para. Express

tensified after a 50-year-old pastor tested positive for COVID-19 earlier this week. In some villages, the names of those loitering around despite the lockdown are being announced on the microphone. Some villages have also formed task forces with members

from the village councils, local wing of the influential NGO, Young Mizo Association, and churches in the area. The primary goal is that if any family needs essential items, the task force will source the material and supply it to the family. The task forces are

also keeping an eye on those asked to remain in home quarantine.

In Nagaland and Manipur, communities have barricaded entries to villages.

From Manipur's Churachandpur district, a photo has emerged that shows two youths posing as guards in front of such a barricade with rifles. The Food Corporation of India faced difficulties in delivery of essentials due to the barricading by local communities and had appealed to the police to remove these. In several villages of Manipur, the barricades have now been removed.

At the entrance of Tripura's Boiragi Para village in Mohanpur subdivision is a barricade with posters that read "Lockdown Boiragi Para" and "No entry without Permission". What sets this

barricade apart is a bucket of water and soap. Isak Kaipeng, a youth from the village, said, "We have decided that whoever comes from outside our village has to wash hands and then go inside."

Near the Bangladesh border in Assam's South Salmara Mankachar district, panchayat secretary Abdul Rashid has a different reason to worry. Most people in the villages in the panchayat work are now out of work. "There is money and food now. But 21 days is a long period," he said. Several families will be eligible for the rice scheme announced by the government, but Rashid says getting that rice in a remote border village during a lockdown could be difficult.

WITH JIMMY LEIVON IN IMPHAL AND DEBRAJ DEB IN AGARTALA

# 7 THE OUTBREAK NATION

## In foreign waters, Navy prepares: refuelling at sea, monitoring on board

SUSHANT SINGH  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

JUST LIKE the Army has set in place contingency plans at 6-hour notice to counter the coronavirus, the Navy, too, has put in a series of precautionary measures to prevent any outbreak on its ships by minimising port calls at foreign shores and continuous medical monitoring of its sailors.

This, even as it continues with its operations in international waters, including missions of geostrategic importance such as anti-piracy patrols off the coast of Africa.

"We have more than 20 ships out at sea at any point in time which includes coastal patrols and harbour patrols, besides the mission-based deployments in international waters. More than 3,000 Naval personnel are on board these vessels and all precautions are being taken in view of the Covid-19 pandemic," a government official told *The Indian Express*.

Worldwide, restrictions to check the spread have reduced port calls at foreign shores to a bare minimum. These calls are significant for logistics support, including critical fuel supply to naval ships.

To overcome this problem, Navy has taken to replenishment at sea, including refuelling of ships in international waters using its own vessels. The last such refuelling was done for *INS Tarkash* this Tuesday. *INS Tarkash* has been deployed as part of Operation Sankalp, which started last July and monitors the situation in the Gulf of Oman.

Besides Op Sankalp, a naval ship, *INS Sunayna*, is currently deployed for anti-piracy missions near the Gulf of Aden, off the eastern coast of Africa. There is another naval deployment for patrolling a strategic choke point of the Strait of Malacca, the main shipping channel between the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean.

Moreover, two ships of the Navy and one ship of the Coast Guard, as part of the First Training Squadron, are off the islands of Mauritius and Seychelles. These ships did a passage exercise at sea with Mauritius National Coast Guard around March 14, while *INS Shardul*, as part of this fleet, supplied 600 tonnes of rice to Madagascar on March 12.

Besides these, in international waters, the Navy, currently, has a ship on operational duty in the Bay of Bengal and one in the Indian Ocean Region, while *INS Jamuna* is undertaking a hydrographic survey in Sri Lanka.

The Navy has also instituted measures to continuously monitor the health and symptoms of its personnel who are part of any planned sailing in the coming days. Medical teams on board these vessels are monitoring the health of personnel. This has become critical after three US sailors on a US navy ship, with 5,000 US military personnel on-board, tested positive for coronavirus.

Meanwhile, the Navy continues to be prepared with its quarantine facilities at Mumbai, Vizag and Kochi to meet any exigencies in support of the civil administration. A Dornier aircraft of the Navy, with a team of four doctors from Goa State Health department, flew from Goa to Pune Wednesday. These doctors were carrying samples of Covid-19 patients for testing and will undergo training to set up a test facility in Goa.

However, the Navy doesn't have any hospital ships in its fleet. This rules out the possibility of using them off the coast for treating patients to take the load off other hospitals. The official said that "whether alternate naval platforms can be used in times of crisis is something which would require a call based on what the situation demands".

## 'Nipah experience helped us draw protocol — minutest details were garnered, analysed'

KERALA CHIEF Minister PINARAYI VIJAYAN tells LIZ MATHEW how the state has put up a fight to contain the spread of coronavirus and the challenges it faces. Excerpts:

**Kerala has won appreciation for effective handling of the situation. What was the biggest advantage the state had in dealing with the situation?**

Historically, Kerala has been performing well in the social sector. Public health, education, and awareness have always been our core areas on which we built up our social infrastructure. We have completely put to use this social infrastructure to combat the menace. We also made it a point (to ensure) that government agencies, various organisations and even voluntary associations are synchronised to take up the challenge.

Our health edifice starts from the village-level primary health centres, which are connected to an extensive network of hospitals.

We activated our health and allied departments when we came to know about the COVID-19 outbreak in China (early January this year). Our experience in dealing with the deadly Nipah (virus) helped us draw up a protocol wherein even the minutest details of information were garnered, analysed and dealt with.

When students from Wuhan affected by COVID-19 boarded their flight from China, we made arrangements to receive them and treat them even while ensuring their disconnect from the society. The government sent (Kerala) Health Minister K K Shailaja to oversee the treatment as well as the protective protocols. As the Chief Minister, I make it a point that review meetings are conducted every day — sometimes more than thrice a day — involving heads of all depart-

ments concerned. It is very important to ensure inter-department and intra-department coordination, as it is a pandemic. Kerala has a well-knit system of local self-governments and their participation was ushered in from the first phase itself.

**What's the uniqueness of the COVID-specific Kerala model?**

We have had the experience of facing the Nipah virus crisis. We had (then) made it a point to imbibe good experiences from across the globe. The protocol we have drawn up is on the basis of this experience, but certainly we made it Kerala-specific considering the peculiarity of our state. We were mindful of our strength as well as weaknesses. Our main strength is the advancement in social sector. We may lack resources but we certainly have a high degree of awareness, education, participation and commitment of people.

Kerala has always risen above parochial and partisan barriers when such exigencies arise.

Right from the beginning we had taken the Opposition into confidence and considered their suggestions. We undertook an intense and massive communication with the local self-governments and I did it along with the Leader of Opposition, Mr Ramesh Chennithala. We addressed representatives of different layers of local self-governments (LSG), starting with ward members in the panchayat. Before video-conferencing with representatives of LSGs, we had convened an all-party meeting to have views of all parties, irrespective of their political orientation. I should say unity and commitment are pivotal to the Kerala model.

As Chief Minister, I had a meeting with all religious leaders in the state through video-conferencing to seek their support for effective social



THE EXPRESS INTERVIEW WITH PINARAYI VIJAYAN KERALA CHIEF MINISTER

distancing. All the leaders assured their full support. Subsequently, they all put off their normal religious gatherings and festivals. Only rituals are being held nowadays; no congregation of people.

**As the numbers went up, did the state change its strategies? Were there course corrections?**

The situation is changing every day. We can't be adamant on any static plans. Our review meetings are intended to upgrade and improve our action plan. Even a small experience reported from elsewhere is looked into to see that our plan is meticulous. Numerous Malayalee health workers from worst-

affected parts of the globe, including Italy, rendered their experience and we hugely benefitted from such inputs.

We have opened a 24-hour war room under a senior IAS officer to monitor and deal with any exigencies at any time. I also make it a point that affected people are heard, irrespective of the timing of their calls. We have also formed a youth army which has 2.36 lakh youngsters between 22 and 40 years to participate in the process actively.

**Were there moments when you felt disappointed? Or did things go as planned?**

I don't have any major complaints about anybody, but we feel let down when someone

doesn't listen to our instructions. There were a couple of cases wherein people who were to observe isolation went around visiting people and places. However, the general public has understood the seriousness of the matter and are adhering to the instructions.

**Kerala's step-by-step approach is much-appreciated. First, containing the spread of the pandemic and then supplementing prohibitory measures with support to people in terms of food and cash.**

We have been very particular that the pandemic needs to be contained. At the same time, people should not face any serious difficulties. Even at the first meeting, I told officers that we are doing everything for the people; nobody should be robbed of their basic amenities. Kerala is a hunger-free state. COVID-19 or not, we want to maintain the state like that. No one will go to bed without food. We are opening community kitchen and we are hopeful of having more than a thousand (of these kitchens).

**Even though Kerala is going through a major financial crisis you announced a package of Rs 20,000 crore.**

Even before the Centre announced a (relief) package, we had announced a series of eco-

nomics measures. We are mindful of the acute shortage of resources. But that should not prevent the government from bringing relief to the people. This was the principle on which we announced the Rs 20,000-crore package. This includes health, loan assistance, free foodgrain, advance payment of welfare pension, more allocation for MGNREGS, subsidised meals, tax relief, and more.

Loans worth Rs 2,000 crore are being made available to families with the help of Kudumbashree. We will not charge any interest on these loans.

The package announced by the Centre is a welcome measure, and we have decided to make use of every scheme to ensure maximum relief to the people. However, the Centre has to go further... the state governments directly deal with any crisis...

**A large expat population is a boon for Kerala when it comes to remittances. But when a pandemic such as this spreads, do you think expats create a kind of dilemma?**

Kerala is one state which has got the maximum interface with global communities. The NRKs (non-resident Keralites) support the state, and their contribution is much valued. Foreign remittance is one of the mainstays of our economy. At the same time, this can turn to be a nightmare when such pandemics break out, because we have to extend our hand across the globe to help them out. We have facilitated the maximum number of people to return to Kerala. But it is impossible for all of them to return. I would request them to stay calm and listen to the protocols of respective countries. I am assuring them that their kith and kin here will be taken care of.

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

## Women's grassroots network drives Kerala's community kitchen plan

VISHNU VARMA  
THRIKKAKARA, MARCH 27

IT'S NEARLY 1 pm and the municipality community hall in Kakkand neighbourhood of Kochi is a hive of activity. Inside, a wooden desk blocks the passage to the hall. A wash basin, complete with handwash, is on the left. On the desk is a bottle of hand sanitiser. Around eight women in white aprons and tennis caps and cloth masks covering half their faces are working behind the desk.

The menu is simple: *ney-choru* (ghee rice) and chicken curry. The cooking's done. One set of women are filling plastic pouches with the chicken curry and the others are tending to the rice.

As soon as they are ready, a couple of men bring the pouches to the desk from where they are scooped into little bags by volunteers and delivered to homes nearby.

At a time when Kerala and the rest of the country are under a lockdown to tackle the coronavirus outbreak, these little food packets from this makeshift community kitchen in Thrikkakara municipality are central to the LDF government's pledge to let no one starve. And powering this kitchen and scores of others is Kudumbashree, a powerful self-help network of 43 lakh women.

On Wednesday, when Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan spoke of opening community kitchens to feed migrant workers and destitutes, councillors of Thrikkakara didn't have to think hard on whom to rely on. They dialled the grassroots units of Kudumbashree and their members immediately jumped on board. The kitchen opened Friday morning.

Kudumbashree, meaning 'prosperity of family' in Malayalam, was born in 1997 as a three-tier community network aimed at empowering women and making them drivers of change at the grassroots. Over the years, their success,



Kudumbashree, meaning 'prosperity of family' in Malayalam, was set up in 1997 as a three-tier community network aimed at empowering women. Vishnu Varma

due in large part to their enterprising abilities, have challenged male hierarchies. From driving taxis to running Metro ticket counters, and operating paper mills to orphanages, they have done it all.

"Kudumbashree's success was that it was able to discover these women who want to function as public servants. More than improving wages, they have shown an inclination to volunteer and do something for the society," said Manjeesh, a district programme manager with the network.

At the community kitchen, as the last of the food packets get bundled up, the cooks have some time to rest before they start preparing dinner.

"We distributed 380 packets of chapathi and vegetable curry in the morning. Lunch and dinner are for 500 people. Tomorrow, we are expecting to cook for nearly 1,000 people, a majority of which would be migrant workers," said Nazar, an independent councillor who helped set up the kitchen.

The process to identify beneficiaries for the meals is

straight-forward: local panchayat ward members/councillors, ASHA workers and anganwadi teachers comb through every home in their jurisdiction, making a list of those who need food.

They add a few dozens, keeping in mind the destitute and the homeless. The state government has already started assigning volunteers who have private vehicles for transporting supplies and meals.

Riyaz, a computer technician, is among those who have signed up as volunteers. Asked if such welfare programmes could turn out to be a burden for the government, he replied, "There's no burden at all. There are so many young people like us waiting to see how we can support the government. All that we spend is on fuel, it is practically nothing."

There's optimism inside the kitchen too. Nisha, one of the cooks, understands the demand for cooked food will go up, but she is not worried. "During the floods, we helped cook for 2,000 people. This is nothing," she says.

## IAS officer suspended for violating home quarantine rules

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 27

AN IAS officer in Kerala has been suspended on charges of violating the home quarantine he was asked to observe on his return from abroad.

Kollam district sub-collector Anupam Mishra, an officer of the 2016 batch, visited Malaysia and Singapore before returning to Kerala on March 18. As per the COVID-19 control procedure, he was asked to be on home quarantine for 28 days starting March 19. However, instead of sticking to the guidelines suggested by the health department and staying at his official residence in Kollam, Mishra returned to his native place in Uttar Pradesh.

Accordingly, he was suspended, based on a report from the district collector B Abdul Nazer, who found that the officer's conduct infringed upon the service rules. Police have also registered a criminal case against him.

## Pinarayi: Kerala govt considering revealing names of patients

CONG DISTRICT LEADER TESTS POSITIVE

SHAJU PHILIP  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 27

ON A day Kerala reported 39 fresh COVID-19 cases, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the state government is thinking about revealing the names of the patients.

He said the new cases reported on Friday had contacted several persons and visited many places and therefore, the government is thinking about publicising their names.

Without taking any name, the Chief Minister said, "This social worker had travelled from Kasaragod to Thiruvananthapuram. The details of his travel are astounding. He had mingled with several persons working in different walks of life. He had even shared the pictures in social media. Is this the manner in which a social worker should behave? This is a warning to all of us that coronavirus is not far away from us."

Later in the day, APUsman, a Congress leader from Idukki district who has tested positive for COVID-19, issued a statement. "As a public activist, I mingled with several persons and travelled a lot. Those who have met me or mingled with me after February 29 should contact

health workers. I don't remember all of them. On many days, I travelled up to 200 km," said the statement by Usman, also a trade union leader.

The route map of Usman, released by the health department, begins with a dharna he attended in front of the state secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram on February 29. Till March 20, he went to several districts, travelled in public transport buses, stayed in hotels and visited mosques and hospitals.

However, Usman has no recent foreign travel history.

The Chief Minister's statement that the state government was considering publicising the names of those who have tested positive comes after several persons placed under home quarantine were found violating isolation guidelines and moving freely in public places.

The state health department has already started putting up stickers outside the houses of those under observation. The stickers have the name and address of the person under observation. They also mention the observation period, dos and don'ts during the period and the number of family members.

In Thiruvananthapuram and Pathanamthitta districts, this exercise has already started.



Kozhikode District Collector Seeram Sambasiva Rao and a police officer question a commuter on Friday. PTI



## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY  
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# After the lockdown

Its announcement has not been matched by national strategy — on containing fallout for poor



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

## WHATEVER IT TAKES

RBI announces much-needed measures, signals welcome readiness to use conventional and unconventional tools

ON FRIDAY, THE governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Shaktikanta Das, announced a slew of measures to supplement government efforts to address the economic upheaval caused by the coronavirus. They follow a three-pronged approach: First, lowering the cost of capital; second, ensuring ample liquidity and a narrowing of the credit spreads of corporates; and third, providing a moratorium on instalments for three months on all term loans of retail and corporate borrowers. These were much needed measures and will help ease the financial burden, prevent credit market dislocation and keep credit channels working, and protect against defaults.

The benchmark repo rate has been cut by 75 basis points to 4.4 per cent, from 5.15 per cent earlier, in light of the unprecedented economic disruption, and the uncertain growth and inflation outlook — even the RBI has refused to provide any forecast on growth and inflation as on now. The reverse repo rate has also been cut, thereby disincentivising banks from parking their funds with the RBI, and prodding them to lend more to the broader economy. On the liquidity front, the measures are equally significant. The central bank has cut the cash reserve ratio by 100 basis points to 3 per cent. It has also announced targeted long-term repo operations of Rs 1 lakh crore. Liquidity availed through this route will have to be deployed in corporate bonds, commercial papers, and debentures. This will bring liquidity to the corporate bond market, and will lead to a fall in yields which have risen in the past few weeks, indicating market dislocation. But the amounts involved may not be enough, and will probably have to be expanded. Further, the challenge will be to ensure liquidity transmission to the larger economy, not just to investment grade companies. The three-month moratorium on instalments of all term loans is another welcome step as it will provide relief to all retail and corporate borrowers who are finding it difficult to service their loans. As is the deferment of interest on working capital, which will help businesses whose revenues will take a massive hit during the lockdown. Banks will also not have to classify these loans as non-performing.

This is uncharted territory. The extent of disruption can only be gauged once there is some certainty over the depth of the outbreak, its spread and duration. As the situation is rapidly evolving, policymakers will have to be mindful that more such measures will probably be needed. But, in stating that the RBI will not shy away from using both conventional and unconventional measures to address the economic crisis, Das has sent a strong message. Efforts of the central bank will have to be supplemented by more fiscal measures as the economic distress continues. The expansion of the scope and size of cash transfers, and more targeted interventions for stressed sectors, especially the unorganised/informal parts of the economy, should be considered.

## A LONG WAY FROM HOME

States need to step up coordination, set up helplines, to reach relief and succour to migrant workers. There is no time to lose

ON FRIDAY, THIS newspaper carried a photograph of a woman breaking down at Howrah railway station because she had missed out on the food being distributed to migrant workers. On the same day, a report spoke of the travails of 12 construction workers in Uttarakhand who had to walk more than 200 km to reach their home in UP's Saharanpur district. They could get only one proper meal in more than 60 hours. Countless such heart-rending stories have come to light ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked all Indians to stay at home to check the spread of the novel coronavirus. The closure of all but essential services as a result of the lockdown, which began on March 25, has dried up sources of livelihood of workers in the country's informal sector, many of them migrants. It's clear that along with addressing the public health challenge, the country will have to find ways to alleviate the mounting distress of rickshaw pullers, construction workers, those working at small roadside eateries, and other daily wagers, including and especially those who are migrants.

On Thursday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a Rs 1.7-lakh crore package to alleviate the economic hardship caused by the pandemic. It aims to ensure food supplies and ease the cash woes of the most vulnerable sections — it comprises an increase in wages as part of the MGNREGA, raising of loan limits for women SHGs and ex-gratia payments to widows and pensioners. These measures have been rightly criticised as inadequate. They also seem insensitive to the plight of the migrant workers. Routing relief through the MGNREGA, for instance, might benefit people in the informal sector only after they reach their villages, and that too, only if there is work to be done. The package for SHGs will not reduce the stress of migrant women workers who are stranded far from their villages.

On Thursday, the Centre asked the state governments to arrange food and shelter for migrant workers. Much more will need to be done. States along India's migration corridors need to step up cooperation and have regular conversations on ways to set up helplines to reach out to people whose livelihoods have been devastated as a result of the country's fight against COVID-19. Dealing with the socio-economic and epidemiological aspects of the coronavirus pandemic will require extensive coordination between the Centre and the states — akin to that seen, in the last three years, at the GST Council. They should come together to devise a mechanism for this purpose.

## DIFFERENT STROKES

Satish Gujral, who worked across disciplines, was a distinguished presence in India's art scene

SATISH GUJRAL, WHO died aged 94 in New Delhi on Thursday, was among the last of the generation of post-Independence Indian artists. His work is distinct as it extended to multiple disciplines and his oeuvre includes painting, sculpture, mural, public art and architecture. Among his peers, only MF Husain experimented across so many disciplines and left a unique signature in all of them.

Gujral was born in undivided Punjab, but lived most of his life in New Delhi. The Partition, expectedly, was a signal influence on his life and a deep presence in his early work. Gujral's development as an artist was in sharp contrast to many others of his generation. While his peers looked to Paris for seeing, learning and training, Gujral chose to train with the radical Mexican muralist, Diego Rivera. Rivera identified himself as a communist and working class politics deeply influenced his art. Gujral did not pursue this ideological course though he engaged with the human tragedy that followed the Partition. Nor did he associate with the Progressives, who were emerging as a significant presence in the Indian art scene. He chose to be on his own and found acceptance in the national capital. New Delhi needed public art and public buildings that reflected its new-found identity as the capital of the Nehru-led non-aligned world. Gujral was ready to experiment and the city was willing to collaborate. The iconic Belgian embassy building in Chanakyaपुरi is a fine specimen of Gujral's work from the 1960s and '70s.

Gujral's life is also an inspirational story of fighting against odds. He lost hearing at the age of 8, but found his voice in art. Support from his family insured him against the precarity many artists of his generation faced — his elder brother, Inder Kumar Gujral, a prominent presence in the capital's political scene, became the Prime Minister of India. But the passion and commitment to art never left him, goading him, till the last, to experiment and create.

INDIA'S DECISION TO lock down was necessary. Two arguments are being advanced against it. India is a poor economy, with millions at the margins of subsistence, who cannot bear the consequences of a lockdown. The density and living conditions in India make social distancing difficult in many cases. The second argument is that the extent of community transmission does not justify such drastic measures.

But these arguments can also be turned on their head. Precisely because millions in India are vulnerable and will not later have the possibilities of quarantining or medical care, the only hope we have of securing their lives is to slow down the spread of the virus as much as possible. And the only shot you have at it is when community transmission is possibly still at manageable levels. There is, therefore, a bit of bad faith in using the poor as basis for expressing scepticism at the need for a lockdown. That is the most insidious form of privilege. The risks of any catastrophic spread will be even more incalculable for the poor.

Crises like these bring out the best and the worst. One of the more encouraging things has been the way in which several state governments like Punjab, Odisha, Kerala, Delhi and others have come into their own, innovating under difficult circumstances. The much neglected panchayat and local officials are key nodes in keeping track of possible cases and the creation of quarantining infrastructure. There is much to be done, and some dismal failures. But it would also be churlish not to acknowledge the ways in which most of the frontline workers of the state are responding, learning and innovating in this situation. If anything, this crisis is bringing home the importance of both federalism and decentralisation as central to a resilient governance architecture.

What is worrying is the national framing of the task ahead. India was good in recognising the gravity of the challenge. But the national preparation and follow-up to take full advantage of the lockdown does not inspire full confidence. The announcement of the lockdown has not been matched by a commensurate national strategy. This is manifest, most importantly, in the early signals on two important aspects: Containing

In the entire framing of the problem, the poor have been at best an afterthought, at worst expendable damage. Take, for instance, the economic package announced for this crisis, which turned out to be closer to a conjurer's trick. Steps like health insurance cover for frontline workers, increased food rations, are welcome steps. But a crisis of this magnitude required an assurance to the most vulnerable that no stops will be pulled to secure their futures. Instead, what you got was incrementalism of the worst kind, masquerading as big commitment.

the economic fallout for the poor and building up the health infrastructure. It is, admittedly, early days; but the signs are not good.

Critics of the Centre are correct in one respect: In the entire framing of the problem, the poor have been at best an afterthought, at worst expendable damage. Take, for instance, the economic package announced for this crisis, which turned out to be closer to a conjurer's trick. Steps like health insurance cover for frontline workers, increased food rations, are welcome steps. But a crisis of this magnitude required an assurance to the most vulnerable that no stops will be pulled to secure their futures. Instead, what you got was incrementalism of the worst kind, masquerading as big commitment, as the details in P Vaidyanathan Iyer's report in this paper ('Holes in the net: Many who have been hit still left out, relief too little', IE, March 27) demonstrates in detail. The cash transfers, in particular, through different schemes, are shockingly low. This crisis is one of the rare instances where economists and even bankers, from across the political spectrum, have rallied around the intellectual argument for unprecedented levels of social security support. So the government's "support by stealth" strategy is even more mystifying.

The magnitude of the crisis unleashed for migrant labour could have been avoided with a little forethought. Early announcement of cash transfers, shelter and food availability, would have obviated the need for migration. It says something about us that we were given more time to prepare for the banging of utensils, than migrant labour was given time to reach home. The near criminalisation of their mere act of trying to walk home is not a reassuring portent. Some states have given clearer directions on how to handle migrant labour movement. But trust in the state has already been damaged.

The treatment of the poor in this crisis seems to bear all the hallmarks of what the state did to them during demonetisation: They are asked to sacrifice disproportionately for the common good, they are treated with impunity, and the state acknowledges their needs only very grudgingly. This economic and humanitarian myopia is also a risk for the social resilience we will need to combat this challenge. Managing the economic fall-

out will, admittedly, have to evolve as the crisis unfolds. But the initial hesitations, missteps and immobilising questions of justice are revealing about our priorities and do not inspire confidence.

But equally worrying is our opacity on the health infrastructure side. Opacity is often a consequence of scarcity. And nowhere is this more manifest than in our discussion of testing. Everyone understands that India has scarce testing capacity, though it seems it is also under-utilising what it has. The government is procuring more testing kits. But what is worrying is that there seems to be no publicly articulated statement of what exactly our testing strategy is, given the scarce resources. What objectives is it trying to meet? There is more than a whiff of suspicion that there is a view that more testing might spread more panic. Or it might put more pressure on the health care system than it can handle. But there is still no sense of how we plan to put a testing strategy in place (not just numbers of tests, but where can they be optimally deployed), that will minimise the need for future lockdowns.

India has never understood that health expenditure is not expenditure; it is investment. The success of the lockdown strategy is premised on an unprecedentedly vigorous building up of health infrastructure to fight the pandemic. There is a commitment by the Centre to infuse an extra Rs 15,000 crore in this sector. Some steps are being taken in building up capabilities, including ramping up production of ventilators and masks.

But this is an area where India needs almost a warlike mobilisation, to make sure we have enough testing, tracking, frontline workers, logistics and equipment in place to make sure that the duration of a lockdown is minimised or a repeat is not necessary. The creation of this kind of infrastructure will pay huge dividends even in non-pandemic times.

The prime minister is constantly asking the citizens to mobilise; and most of them respond. But it about time the state mobilises: On an economic stimulus that is truly meaningful and health infrastructure push that inspires confidence.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express.



AJAY VIR JAKHAR

## JUST HALFWAY THERE

Stimulus is less than what it appears to be. Government must do more for farmers

APRIL IS UPON US. The Indian summer will soon sear the land and the wheat harvest will commence in full measure in Punjab and Haryana, while it has already begun in other parts of the country. Other than that, we do not yet know what will come next. As wheat is procured under the Centre's MSP programme, the onus lies with the government to assuage the unease among the states and the farmers that harvest will begin on time, procurement will happen, stocks will be lifted and payments received as in the past. In case the process is delayed, the government must assure farmers it will, if required, compensate them and extend the wheat procurement season.

Closure of markets has created anxiety amongst farmers as cereals, fruits and vegetables are ready for harvest across the country. The poultry industry, in particular, is severely hit. They need to be permitted to transport goods to functioning mandis. The lockdown has hindered the supply chain. Allowing the movement of tractors and labour between villages will ensure that harvesting isn't impacted and supply chains can resume.

Over the past two days, it's evident that standard operating procedures for the continuity of supply chains and farm operations in the National Disaster Management Authority framework are missing for ground-level administrators to fall back upon. A lack of clarity results in multiple notifications from the establishment and a lack of credible communi-

The Rs 70 lakh crore stimulus is not what it appears to be, it's possibly half the size of the announced quantum. Even though the price of crude has halved since October 2019, the common man is paying an extra Rs 35 per LPG cylinder. Consumers are being forced to pay higher prices for essential commodities, as profiteers begin to cash in on the supply chain disruption. This negates the benefits of cash transfers or free gas cylinders to BPL families.

cation by the Centre and states is making farmers anxious. The hue and cry by farmers resulted in seeds and pesticide sales being added to the list of essential commodities and rightly so. Other issues too are slowly being resolved. But these recently notified changes are not reflected on the ground.

A black swan event like the coronavirus could not have come at a worse time. India's economy was already decelerating. Understandably, India's arsenal to respond economically stood depleted because of past policies, but the present relief package is wanting in greater depth.

The Rs 70 lakh crore stimulus is not what it appears to be, it's possibly half the size of the announced quantum. Even though the price of crude has halved since October 2019, the common man is paying an extra Rs 35 per LPG cylinder. Consumers are being forced to pay higher prices for essential commodities, as profiteers begin to cash in on the supply chain disruption. This negates the benefits of cash transfers or free gas cylinders to BPL families.

The average annual days of employment provided per household under the MGNREGA is about 45 and not 100 as claimed. Like Punjab which gives Rs 240 per day wages under MGNREGA, more than half the states were already committed to giving more than the hiked wages of Rs 202. Further, due to the lockdown, work under the scheme has come to a standstill. Instead of ensuring the availability of 100

days of work and that farmers will receive the promised MSP for once, the bureaucracy hoodwinked the Union Cabinet to get assurances of timely release of their own salaries.

Unprecedented circumstances require bold and swift decisions. The announcement under PM Kisan is only about releasing outstanding dues. The government should double the PM Kisan payments to Rs 12,000 for this year. Distribution of grains to 80 crore people is commendable but it will remain a mystery as to why it wasn't announced and distributed in February when the crisis was on the horizon. Transferring three monthly instalments of Rs 500 each to 20 crore women in Jan Dhan accounts is a good targeting of resources but amounts to less than two days of minimum wages per month. Providing Rs 2,000 to three crore senior citizens and socially marginalised sections is a compassionate step.

The RBI has to create money and directly provide people with purchasing power. It should waive interest on farm loans and reschedule loan payments. Now, the hope is that the government will quickly transfer money to the beneficiaries. Issues of red tape have to be overcome. This is not the time to fear errors of inclusion, but errors of exclusion. Farmers have wholeheartedly voted for the PM twice, it is time he returned the favour. Every season has an end for a harvest to begin.

The writer is chairman, Bharat Krishak Samaj

## MARCH 28, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

**RAJYA SABHA VOTE**  
THE RAJYA SABHA endorsed the dissolution of nine state assemblies after the Opposition staged a walk-out protesting against the "anti-democratic and disgraceful" proclamations that led to the dismissal of nine non-Congress-I state governments. Defections from opposition parties as well as the support of the DMK and several independents helped the ruling party, that started with 71 members when the last session of the Rajya Sabha began, stave off a defeat for the second time in the House where it has only 101 members. The absence of several Opposition members at the time of voting also turned out to be a crucial factor in the government's

victory.  
**ANTI-ASSAM PROTEST**  
THE CHHATRA PARISHAD (I) and Yuba Congress (I) intensified their "economic blockade" of Assam with violent demonstrations at several points in North Bengal. At the rail-road junction near Bagdogra airport, a large number of volunteers demonstrated, halting some 20 Assam-bound trucks. A train was also sought to be stopped. Four trucks were set on fire. The police had to resort to lathi-charge to disperse violent demonstrators, unlike in the previous few days when a show of force dispersed the protestors. About 250 volunteers were arrested and some per-

sions were injured in the lathicharge.  
**NUCLEAR SECURITY**  
PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi assured the Rajya Sabha that experiments on the enrichment of uranium "are going on" and there was no need to be exercised over Pakistan's reported capability to produce weapons-grade uranium. Seeking to allay apprehensions of the members, she said general preparations to strengthen the defence of the country was a continuing process and therefore there was no reason to develop a sense of insecurity. K C Pant expressed concern over India's security in the light of activities in Pakistan.





# 9 THE IDEAS PAGE

## How to minimise the damage

The first stimulus announced by central government targets the poor, as it must. Later announcements should support small business, specific industries, keep the financial system running



NEELKANTH MISHRA

GIVEN THE RAPIDLY changing situation globally and in India, any forecasts will necessarily have a large margin of error. But at the same time, not having even a broad sense of where we are headed can create bigger problems. With that disclaimer, we estimate that the lockdown, which impairs 37 per cent of India's total output, could shave 4 per cent from the annual GDP over 21 days.

There are several factors that are likely to make the impact on annual output worse. The national lockdown may be extended beyond April 14, and its relaxation thereafter is likely to be staggered. Further, the loss of income during this period could impair economic momentum for several quarters after that. There are challenges in the financial system too, where foreign lenders had contributed to more than a third of incremental credit in the last 12 months, but now that market is effectively shut. Slowing global growth will have its own impact on Indian exporters, as will the disruption in global supply chain caused by factories shut by quarantine rules.

On the positive side, governments across the world, including India's, are announcing large spending programmes to protect people's livelihoods; even if with a lag, some of the global stimulus could help India's export demand too. Similarly, the significant monetary easing by developed market central banks is likely to make funding easier once the current market turbulence abates. The lower price of oil also helps the Indian economy.

Unlike prior instances of economic disruption, which had a strong rebound in economic activity once restrictions were removed, much of the income lost in the current slowdown is likely to be permanent. While there may be some rebound, the drop in consumption due to lost incomes can kickstart a vicious cycle of slowing economic growth.

We may look to revive economic growth after we have the virus under control, but we must look to minimise damage now. Given that income generation has stalled, economic activity can only be sustained by digging into past savings or borrowing from the future. These can happen at the levels of individuals, firms or governments. Salaried folks are able to maintain their consumption because the firms that they work for either have cash reserves, or are able to borrow money to keep paying salaries. The self-employed are dipping into their rainy-day funds, as are the governments of Singapore and Norway: Their savings over the past decades are now being put to good use. Countries like Saudi Arabia, impacted by both the lockdowns as well as lower oil prices, are going to borrow to maintain their spending, which can then sustain their citizens.

Poor individuals do not have any buffers to dig into, and also cannot borrow easily. This is particularly true of migrant workers in urban areas: Many do not have the social networks that can help them survive the lockdown using informal credit.



CR Sasikumar

In rural areas they have that cushion - that India has a weak state but a strong society plays a role there; migrant workers lack this support.

The first stimulus announced by the central government, therefore, targets the poor - trying to help them stay fed and meet basic needs without having to invoke a "lives versus livelihoods" optimisation when it comes to following social distancing norms. There is an attempt to protect low-paid employees of small businesses whose jobs may have been at risk by paying their provident fund contributions. Prudently, the package also works on better utilisation of assets built up in the past - not just the excess inventory lying with the Food Corporation of India, but also allowing formal sector workers to tap into their Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) funds.

Subsequent stimulus announcements could help improve the survivability of small businesses, support specific industries (like airlines, travel and tourism) and keep the financial system running. Small firms are only slightly better off than unsalaried individuals, with low savings cushions and weak cash flows: The drop in incomes may affect the solvency of some, but the lack of liquidity is likely to hurt most of them. When inflows stop, fixed costs become a challenge: Other than salaries, these mostly mean rents, interest costs and utility bills. While rents are bilateral, and may be adjusted between landlords and tenants without the state having to intervene, the incessant interest rate accumulation can cause significant damage to individuals and firms. It was not surprising therefore to see the RBI announce forbearance on deferment of loan repayments for three months. But this then pushes the pain to the financial system. The regulator has also eased some norms to help with their liquidity and viability.

The financial system has other problems too. The bond market currently shows signs of dislocation, as it is unclear which firms will survive the downturn. That this is happening globally is no solace. As foreign funding, which filled in the gap as the non-banking financial firms slowed their loan growth, has slowed too, this market needs support. Without a backstop from the government,

the central bank may not be able to provide the necessary liquidity.

These steps are necessary to minimise the damage during the lockdown. A second part of government spending must kick in once normal activities resume, and losses from the lockdown have been assessed. This would be to stimulate economic growth.

Is there enough fiscal space? Just the drop in growth, shortfall in taxes, and the low likelihood of meeting disinvestment or spectrum sale targets means the central deficit could be well above the budgeted target. The central bank may need to buy bonds: something that is happening across the world. But if central banks start printing money to buy government bonds, how does one figure out the limits of fiscal spending? We believe this constraint would be an external one. If printing money to consume goes beyond a threshold, it would disturb India's external balances and hence cause the currency to weaken. Our preliminary estimates suggest there is adequate room currently for a significantly stronger stimulus than provided thus far.

An equally important issue is inter-generational income transfer. A fourth of central government spending today is interest costs, a stark reminder that the money spent as stimulus today is money we borrow from our kids. This consideration must be balanced with the economic growth we must target to give them a brighter future. It is necessary to keep the stimulus temporary (unlike the wage increases to government employees given during 2008-09 that caused permanent damage to fiscal balances), and prioritise building assets rather than consuming.

Some observers are also concerned about what high deficits would do to India's credit ratings. It remains to be seen how agencies respond to globally large fiscal deficits monetised by central banks; India may not be an outlier here. Further, these agencies focus on sustainability of debt, and growth, which is an integral part of that analysis, and therefore must be the policy priority.

The writer is co-head of Asia-Pacific Equity Strategy and India Strategist for Credit Suisse

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Should there be a need for further relief packages, we hope the government will not hesitate to provide them, especially to the poorer sections of society and people working in the informal sector such as day labourers and rickshaw pullers, who are surely the most vulnerable under the prevailing circumstances." — THE DAILY STAR

## The new world disorder

COVID pandemic has exposed the fragility of global society and governance — and pointed to the way forward



SHASHI THAROOR SAMIR SARAN

IT IS UNFORTUNATE that the coronavirus pandemic should have plagued the international community at its weakest moment, where national politics and economic parochialism are upending the idea of "one global village". As Professor Sridhar Venkatapuram correctly notes in his article (IE, March 26), we take issue with the current state of the international order in our book, *The New World Disorder & the Indian Imperative*. It is not the values and norms that it ostensibly professes that we take objection to, but the means through which they have been devised, exercised and often betrayed.

Among the many crises of global governance we document, two, in particular, stand out in regard to this new pandemic. First, the waning legitimacy of international institutions. The WHO's response to the outbreak, with its indulgence of the official Chinese line for far too long, is an important case in point. Many of our global institutions and their agencies suffer from politicisation, manipulation and a lack of representation, independent leadership and purpose. The second crisis relates to national sovereignty, and its resurgence amidst the wave of nationalism sweeping the world.

Headlines from around the world bear testament to these symptoms. The Trump administration's "America First" instinct has seen it attempt to source a vaccine for the American people alone from Germany, to cancel pharmaceutical imports from China and to stymie global consensus on the response by insisting on the divisive "Wuhan virus" formula at the G-7 and, currently, at the UN Security Council. Beijing, meanwhile, has got away with letting the virus loose, handling it initially in an opaque manner, and manipulating the institutional architecture that should have responded to it. It is now attempting to play saviour by supplying emergency medical equipment to the world and emergency medical teams to Italy. Experience suggests that nations will pay for this help with silence on China's misdemeanours. Even the EU has struggled to support its member states in their worst public health emergency in modern history.

We can only look on with disappointment as the thesis of our book plays out in real-time, with such fatal consequences. Our sweeping critique of global governance should not lead to the mistaken conclusion that it is a futile enterprise. Here, we'd like to engage with Professor Venkatapuram's criticism that our book does not "go into how the global order creates and distributes health risks like COVID-19". It is, in fact, the recognition of the interdependence and shared resilience — and fragility — of our global society that prompted us to undertake this exercise. Had global governance been working effectively, the world would have identified the coronavirus as soon as it emerged; sounded a global alarm earlier about its dangers; and publicised the best practices that should have been adopted by all countries to prevent or limit its spread. That this did not happen is a damn-

ing indictment of the state of our new world disorder.

As our book demonstrates, the coronavirus is far from the first global bug to have bitten us, nor will it be the last. In 2001, we learnt that anger and malice in Afghanistan could take down skyscrapers in New York. The year 2008 saw dormant financial malpractices in the US rapidly metastasise into a global financial crisis. In 2016, Russia tried to register itself in the voter rolls for the US elections. It is clear to us that the sheer complexity and immeasurability of our interdependence requires more global governance, not less.

This perspective also informs the subtext of our book, "the Indian imperative". The coronavirus outbreak has drawn attention to what these imperatives are in the decades ahead. The first, is providing for our people. India's vast, mostly undocumented and migrant informal workforce, is already suffering the heaviest damage from the economic fallout. Professions that are predominantly underpaid and unprotected will be collaterals. We remain hopeful that the Indian government and its society will see in this crisis an opportunity to resolve the many socio-economic inequities that plague our country.

This leads us to the second imperative: To use these domestic experiences and policy lessons to shape India's international engagement. The pandemic has accentuated the governance challenges confronting most emerging economies. Responding to their needs presents India the opportunity to be a very different type of power. The source of the US' power was its vast geopolitical network of military and diplomatic alliances and economic institutions. China's rise, on the other hand, was facilitated by its geo-economic power and control over supply chains and trade. As we argue in our book, India will likely be the world's first development power — with its rise being linked to its ability to provide governance solutions to the development needs of millions from Asia and Africa.

It is also incumbent on India to reboot the ethic of global cooperation. The world is slipping into spheres of influence of exclusive arrangements, limiting our ability to respond effectively to global challenges. India's early outreach to the SAARC community and its proactive role in the G20 demonstrates that it remains adept at navigating ideological-political diversity comfortably, something it needs to do at home too.

The coronavirus epidemic is a devastating reminder of the consequences of disorder. It is also a timely memo to sovereignty states that the re-assertion of sovereignty must not imply an abandonment of global responsibilities. When the current pandemic is over, the globe must learn lessons about what happened, and how international systems and institutions can be strengthened and radically reformed in order to forestall its recurrence.

Many will find in this pandemic an opportunity to close themselves off to the international community. India must defy such impulses. If anything, Indian leadership in these times — and a new resolve for global governance — may be just the vaccine that the international community needs to navigate a new decade.

Tharoor is a Member of Parliament for Thiruvananthapuram, and Saran is president of the Observer Research Foundation; They are co-authors of *The New World Disorder & the Indian Imperative*



GOPAL SANKARANARAYANAN

## Ayyappa and the Court

Supreme Court needs CEO to streamline functioning, reduce burden on CJ

THE LORD of the Sabarimala hills must be a confused soul. He finds himself now at the heart of independent India's largest debate on religious freedom, before a bench of nine judges of the Supreme Court. Millions of his disciples have protested the Court's 2018 verdict where gender equality was held to trump the tenets of the faith, and rejoiced at the November 2019 order of the Chief Justice's bench granting their cause a fresh lease of life. As things stand, their review petitions are kept pending until the questions of law are determined.

However, even Lord Ayyappa does not look like he will be getting a ready answer as to who constitutes his congregation. In December 2019, fervent pleas on behalf of certain women devotees to enter the temple were declined, although the 2018 verdict continued to hold the field. This was justified by the Court on a "balance of convenience", thereby laying down a new principle for not directing the implementation of its own judgement. No surprises there: The BCCI case is a classic example of new jurisdictions being carved out to reverse a complete and final adjudication.

This year it was decided to put together the nine-judge bench to hear the cases on an urgent basis. But with two judges from the ongoing Kashmir/Article 370 challenges also a part of the Sabarimala case, it would mean that the Kashmir issues would be put on the back burner in the middle of its hearing; This is despite the advocates representing the

right of women's entry stating that they had no objection to the Kashmir cases being heard first.

Then, barely a day into the hearing, a strain of swine flu reached some of the members of the Bench, leading to a postponement of hearings till the middle of March. Now, with a fierce pandemic enveloping the globe, the case is adjourned indefinitely.

Over the last few months, the Supreme Court has been besieged by criticism of its administrative functioning. Cases that have customarily been heard with alacrity, like those concerning personal liberty, law and order and criminal investigation, have been posted after long intervals with the Government being granted a luxury of time to respond. Where immediacy is pre-eminent so that fait accompli may not be created (as with the validity of the Kashmir notifications, the CAA and the electoral bonds), there have been no effective hearings at the interim stage. Thus, the status quo slowly cements itself.

These critics broadly fall into two categories: Those who make the more palatable claim that the Court has been casual, almost lax in making such allowances; and, the harsher ones who attribute such judicial inaction to executive influence.

A large part of this quandary is attributable to the Court itself. Since the early years of the judiciary, one person has been given the onerous dual charge of heading both the administrative and judicial func-

tions of the court. As a result, apart from sitting every day, reading briefs, hearing arguments and delivering detailed judgements, the Chief Justice has to also act as the final authority for all service-related matters of the Court's 2,500 employees, issue office orders to streamline the registry, supervise measures for security and infrastructure, chair committees, correspond with and entertain judicial delegations, attend symposia, delegate subject matters among colleagues, constitute benches of varying strengths and interview candidates for the various courts. In the old days, when the burden of cases was modest, these tasks would not have been challenging. But in the present time, not only are they overwhelming, but they also bring in their wake a host of attacks on the person who occupies that high office.

In all the administrative tasks, the Chief Justice is assisted by a team of registrars, who are headed by the secretary general. As they are junior judicial officers, they neither have the training nor the complete independence to take steps towards course correction. This is why the Supreme Court sorely requires a chief executive officer — an independent professional who is equipped with the day-to-day management of the Court and is not beholden to the judges in any way. This individual will be charged with the entire mission of running the Court, so that the judges can concentrate on what they are trained and experienced

to do — adjudicate. The CEO will, of course, have to be given adequate operational autonomy and be answerable to a committee of the Court, comprising judges and bar representatives, thereby providing for a professional process, much like in the corporate sphere. With this, the judges will at least be spared the charges that they have had to withstand over the last few years.

What, then, of those who say that there has been governmental interference? This year's Malayalam box office hit Ayyappanum Koshiyum has at its heart an ego battle in a small hillside town between an honest police officer and an entitled scion of a political family. The soul of the movie, however, and why I think it is recommended viewing for anybody in public office, is the manner in which committed public servants can dismantle even the most oppressive of influences by merely using the full force of the law. It is only for politicians to concern themselves with public opinion, not for judges. They are weaponised by the Constitution to serve the cause of justice, and in this, as per Article 144, all civil and judicial authorities are enjoined to cooperate. Just a few blows of the gavel to any misadventures would be sufficient to send the message loud and clear: That the Court offers no sanctuary to the executive knaves.

The writer is a senior advocate, Supreme Court of India

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### BATTLING CORONA

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Arduous road ahead' (IE, March 27). The announcement of the COVID-19 relief package was much needed and hopefully may alleviate the problems of marginalised populace. But with breakdown of logistics, primarily transportation, how will the food grains and pulses reach the PDS outlets and at a time, when people's movement is restricted, how will they access such outlets. Moreover, the money that will be transferred to the Jan Dhan accounts is very inadequate. Corporate support to the anti-pandemic measures has also not been adequate.

Deepak Singhal, Chennai

### PLAN FOR POOR

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Lockdown and poor' (IE, March 27). The WHO declared a Corona pandemic on March 11. But the government allowed air traffic into the country for at least 10 more days. That was necessary to facilitate a safe return of NRIs. But it did not have any plan to evacuate millions of labourers stranded in Metros. Such people face mental stress as well.

Suchak D Patel, Ahmedabad

### LETTER OF THE WEEK

#### VIRUS ALERT

This refers to the editorial, 'The reality check' (IE, March 24). Despite months of impending threat of the coronavirus pandemic, the government did not come out with a comprehensive plan to address the existential issues of thousands for unorganised and migrant workers. Meanwhile, lockdowns have forced these workers in megacities to leave for their home states in choked trains and buses.

L R Murmu, Delhi

THIS REFERS TO the article 'Lockdown and the poor', (IE, March 27). The lockdown is a necessary evil to contain community spreading. Compelling people to stay back at their place of residence alone could guarantee some degree of protection against this highly contagious virus.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



JOINING THE FIGHT

AS THE number of COVID-19 cases in the country rises, everyone is trying to contribute to the fight the way they can. Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu has found the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund as a medium to pitch in.

ON PUBLIC DEMAND

ONE OF the most successful shows of Indian television is making a comeback, and it is not solely because of its popularity. The Information and Broadcasting Ministry and Prasar Bharati have decided to bring back Ramanand Sagar's Ramayan on Doordarshan National, starting Saturday.

ADAPTING TO CHANGE

BUREAUCRATS ACROSS ministries are working from home amid the lockdown. One of the adjustments most senior officers have had to make is in the drafting of official letters.

APPEAL TO STEP IN

WITH THE pandemic putting fiscal pressure on the government, public servants may have to do their bit to contribute. An appeal has gone out to some 13 lakh employees of Railways to donate at least a day's salary to the PM National Relief Fund.

Civilian killed by militants in J&K

Srinagar: A civilian was killed by militants in South Kashmir's Kulgam district on Friday evening, the police said. A police spokesperson said militants fired at Mehraj Din Bhat injuring him. Today at about 8:45pm Kulgam police received information about a terror crime incident in Redwani area of District Kulgam.

IS-Khorasan, which attacked Kabul gurdwara, is led by ex-Lashkar man

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN MUMBAI, MARCH 27

THE LEADER of the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), which claimed to have carried out the attack on the Kabul gurdwara, migrated to the group from the Lashkar-e-Taiba, the UN designated terrorist organisation linked to the Pakistani security establishment.

The 43-year-old Mawlawi Aslam Farooqi, who took over the leadership of the IS-K last year, is a Pashtun who joined the Lashkar in 2004.

The IS-K is a loose conglomerate of several jihadist tanzim with differing targets and aims. The group's relations with the Taliban, and with Pakistan, are critical elements in its still evolving identity.

India condemned the gurdwara massacre as "a cowardly attack" that showed the "diabolical mindsets of the perpetrators and their backers", a thinly veiled reference to Pakistan.

For months, the Indian security establishment has flagged that the IS-K is now virtually a front of the LeT. Although India has hinted at this in its statement, the missing piece that some security officials are puzzling over is why the LeT would target the Sikh community at a time when, according to these officials, Pakistan has gone out of its way to woo this Indian minority group, especially since mid-2018, through the Kartarpur Corridor initiative.

Farooqi took charge of the IS-K in April 2019, according to a report submitted to the UN Security Council in July 2019 by a UN committee that monitors Daesh (or Islamic State), al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

The report said Farooqi (also spelt Faruqi), who had been previously in charge of IS-K operations in the Khyber region on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, was promoted to the leadership in place of Mawlawi Zia ul-Haq in April 2019.

"Ul-Haq's demotion was reportedly due to poor performance in the context of ISIL-K setbacks in Nangarhar [province in Afghanistan] in the second half of 2018. The new leadership nomination was made during a visit by an ISIL core delegation, underscoring the direct relationship between ISIL-K and the ISIL core in

Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic," said the report by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the Daesh and Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the UNSC.

In his book The Islamic State in Kohrasan - Afghanistan, Pakistan and the new Central Asian Jihad, Antonio Giustozzi, a well known academic who has written extensively on the IS and Afghanistan, details the rise of Farooqi in IS-K. Giustozzi says Farooqi was chosen as the "governor of Kohrasan" by the military shura of IS-K on May 22, 2018, a year earlier than what the UN report says.

Two months later, in July 2018, IS-K claimed an attack on a convoy of Sikhs and Hindus in Jalalabad, in which 19 people were killed, 13 of them Sikhs.

Giustozzi writes that Farooqi, an Afriidi Pashtun from Pakistan, was based in Afghanistan from 2007-2014, from where he was sent along with a batch of 167 LeT fighters to fight alongside Islamic State Syria. Like several others in that delegation, which included fighters from other groups too such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Farooqi had joined the IS before

returning to Pakistan in 2016, as did a 100 other LeT fighters in that group.

Quoting an IS-K source, Giustozzi says the decision to make Farooqi leader "was the result of contacts with the Pakistani ISI", possibly as a trade-off - "the appointment of a leader linked to the ISI and the cessation of attacks against Pakistani government targets, in return for access to safe havens in Pakistan". He also says that for the same reason of his closeness to the ISI, Farooqi's appointment was a source of tension and opposition from other groups that make up the IS-K.

The IS-K was formed by a coming together of two main groups - one called the Tehreek-e-Khilafat Pakistan that had elements of the TTP and the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which saw opportunities in the far wealthier ISIS; and the other, Tehreek-e-Khilafat Khorasan, which saw itself as an anti-Afghan Taliban group. The IS-K also includes several other groups including Chinese and Uzbek jihadists.

From among the Pakistani groups, the LeT was not as readily welcomed by IS-K as the LeT or the TTP. For the IS-K, Pakistan too, was

an enemy, along with America and the "puppet" Afghan government in Kabul. So was the Afghan Taliban, which according to IS-K, was not fighting a pure jihad. The LeT was seen as "a representative of the Pakistan government", and those who joined from the LeT were treated with suspicion.

But with Farooqi's ascent to the IS-K's leadership, those differences are likely to have disappeared. As for the Taliban, it saw the IS-K as a threat and fought it fiercely. In its agreement with the US, the Taliban have committed to eliminate IS-K. But Sirajuddin Haqqani, the pro-Pakistan leader of the Haqqani group and now deputy leader of the Taliban, is said to be more neutral towards the IS-K after initial hostility.

A Haqqani clansman had joined IS-K and begun to wean away other Haqqani group commanders, and that had set Sirajuddin's back up against the IS-K, but he later saw its uses. Giustozzi writes he had been using the same commanders to get the IS-K to drop its attacks against Pakistan.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

Brahmakumaris Sansthan chief Dadi Janki dies at 104

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA JAIPUR, MARCH 27

RAJYOGINI DADI Janki, the chief of Brahmakumaris Sansthan, the world's largest spiritual organisation run by women, died at the age of 104 after prolonged illness.

She breathed her last at 2 am on Friday at a hospital in Mount Abu. She was suffering from respiratory and stomach-related problems for the last two months, an official statement said.

Her last rites will be performed on Friday at a ground located in Shanti Van campus of Brahmakumaris headquarters.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over her demise. "Rajyogini Dadi Janki ji, Chief of the Brahma Kumaris, served society with diligence. She toiled to bring a positive difference in the lives of others." Dadi Janki was born on January 1, 1916 in Hyderabad, Pakistan.



Dadi Janki

The socialist who returned home: Beni Prasad Verma

RAVISH TIWARI NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

FORMER UNION Minister and senior Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Beni Prasad Verma (79) died at a private hospital in Lucknow on Friday. Verma, a Rajya Sabha member from Uttar Pradesh, had been ailing for some time.

Born in a peasant family belonging to the Kurmi community, Verma was a lawyer before he joined politics under the tutelage of Socialist leader Ram Sewak Yadav in Barabanki in the early 1970s. He went on to first serve as a minister in the state government, and then as Union minister in the United Front (1996-1998) and the UP-IP governments.

A Socialist, Verma started his politics in the anti-Congress camp, growing under the peasant politics steered by Charan Singh in UP. He was among the few pre-Emergency Socialist leaders active in current national politics.

Verma was first elected to the Assembly in 1974, under the banner of Charan Singh's Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD).

Though a term senior to him, Mulayam Singh Yadav was also elected as a BKD member the same year. And thus they became comrades in arms.

Charan Singh groomed both, as he tried to stitch together a social coalition against the politics of the Congress.



BENI PRASAD VERMA 1941-2020

He ensured that both were included in the post-Emergency Janata government in Lucknow. When Janata Party split in 1980, both these leaders opted for Charan Singh's Bharatiya Lok Dal.

Verma remained Mulayam's loyal fellow traveller through Mandal politics - when Mulayam became UP chief minister for the first time in 1989, when he split from Janata Dal to contest separately in 1991 Assembly polls, and when Samajwadi Party was founded in 1992.

Having parted ways from the Janata Dal, Mulayam got a reality check in the 1991 Assembly polls, when his Janata Party won just 34 seats in the 425-member House, despite being hailed by secularists for his defence of the Babri Masjid during the karsevak agitation of 1990. Verma was instrumental in winning a cluster of five Assembly segments. So, when Mulayam floated the SP, he kept Verma by his side.

When Mulayam played an instrumental role in the formation of the United Front government at the Centre, he chose Verma, along with Janeshwar Mishra and himself, to represent the SP in the

coalition government. Verma was later elevated to Cabinet rank. The Telecom Regulatory Authority Act, 1997, which guided the opening up of the telecom sector, happened under his watch as the Communications Minister.

But in 2009, Verma parted ways with Mulayam, when the latter collaborated with Kalyan Singh, the protagonist of Kamandal politics in UP. He joined the Congress, and was invited to join the then Manmohan Singh government in January 2011.

Verma, known to be plainspoken, refused to attend the swearing-in ceremony when he found out that the seating order indicated that his rank was Minister of State (independent charge). He only relented after an assurance that he would be elevated soon.

Months later, he was elevated to Cabinet rank and was inducted into the Congress Working Committee, ahead of 2012 UP Assembly polls. The Congress's poll setback marked the beginning of Verma's disenchantment with the party, that ended with his return to SP in 2016, when he was sent to Rajya Sabha.

Verma was averse to BJP's politics till the end. Early during his stint in Congress, his derogatory remarks against Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Parliament in 2009 forced Manmohan to apologise.

"Anguished by the passing away of Shri Beni Prasad Verma. My thoughts are with his family and supporters in this sad hour. Om Shanti," the Prime Minister's Office tweeted, quoting Narendra Modi, on Friday.

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav also condoled his death.

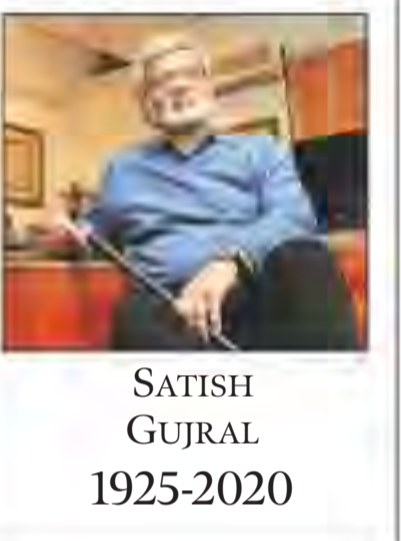
'To him the medium was not prime, it was the concept'

VANDANA KALRA NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

AT THE age of eight, he had first picked the pencil to doodle his thoughts after an accident terminally impacted his hearing. Art, thereafter, was to become his voice and the language through which Satish Gujral spoke to the world. On March 26, that voice was forever silenced, with the passing away of the artist. The Padma Vibhushan awardee was 94. His cremation was held in Delhi in the presence of close family members on Friday.

"To me, he has a very unique place. With great strength, he dealt with his physical incapacities on one side and his conceptual abilities on the other, which is very rare. I would describe him as a conceptual planner - to him medium was not prime, it was the concept. He managed to assimilate and imbibe several creative languages in his work," says artist Rajeev Lochan. As the director of National Gallery of Modern Art, he organised Gujral's retrospective in 2006. Artist Vivan Sundaram adds, "He was extremely affectionate. He was quite an institution in Delhi, and a grand figure who will be sadly missed."

While the medium of his expression varied from paint to wood, metal, paper collages, ceramics and architecture, the subjects too spanned from an exploration of the relationship between man and technology to his interpretation of mythology. Gujral is best known, however, as the artist who painted the darkness of the



SATISH GUJRAL 1925-2020

what I witnessed remained with me and was reflected in my work. Art was a medium to express that turmoil," Gujral had told The Indian Express in 2010.

Though he was trained in the techniques of art at the Mayo College of Art in Lahore, it was Gujral's experiences and surroundings that truly defined and influenced his works. The younger brother of former Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, he would often recall how he would accompany him to gatherings and poetry reading sessions of stalwarts such as Ali Sardar Jafri and Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

In 1952, he got a scholarship to study at the reputed Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico, where he apprenticed under renowned artists David Alfaro Siqueiros and Diego Rivera, and became friends with Frida Kahlo. While critics in India acknowledged his talent, in the art fraternity he remained relatively a loner who did not relate with the ideologies of the then dominant Progressive Artists Group. He reportedly convinced Jawaharlal Nehru to make a rule that a reserved percentage of the cost incurred towards making a public building should be allotted for art.

A proponent of public art, his murals are on buildings across the world, from the Delhi High Court to Shastri Bhavan and Gandhi Bhavan in Chandigarh. He also dabbled with architecture, designing the Belgian Embassy in Delhi and Goa University.

FULL OBITON www.indianexpress.com

दक्षिणांचल विद्युत वितरण निगम लि., कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता विद्युत वितरण मण्डल, हमीरपुर पत्रांक सं.- 1320/ वि.वि.म.ह./ पी-1 (प्रकाशन)/ निविदा/ 2019-20 दिनांक:- 27/03/20 अत्यकालीन (ई-निविदा) निविदा खुलने की तिथि एवं निविदा से सम्बन्धित अन्य सभी विवरण ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट पोर्टल https://etender.up.nic.in एवं निगम की वेबसाइट https://dvnv1.org पर उपलब्ध है। 1. ई-निविदा संख्या- 166/ SE/ EDCH/ 2019-20: कार्य का विवरण: अधीक्षण अभियन्ता विद्युत वितरण मण्डल हमीरपुर के कार्यालय में विभागीय कार्यों के सम्पादन हेतु 03 नग कम्प्यूटर मय आपरेटर उपलब्ध कराने का कार्य। 2. ई-निविदा संख्या- 167/ SE/ EDCH/ 2019-20: कार्य का विवरण: अधिशासी अभियन्ता विद्युत वितरण खण्ड हमीरपुर के कार्यालय में विभागीय कार्यों के सम्पादन हेतु 06 नग कम्प्यूटर मय आपरेटर उपलब्ध कराने का कार्य। 3. ई-निविदा संख्या- 168/ SE/ EDCH/ 2019-20: कार्य का विवरण: अधिशासी अभियन्ता विद्युत वितरण खण्ड राठ के कार्यालय में विभागीय कार्यों के सम्पादन हेतु 04 नग कम्प्यूटर मय आपरेटर उपलब्ध कराने का कार्य। 4. ई-निविदा संख्या- 169/ SE/ EDCH/ 2019-20: कार्य का विवरण: अधिशासी अभियन्ता विद्युत परीक्षण खण्ड राठ के कार्यालय में विभागीय कार्यों के सम्पादन हेतु 01 नग कम्प्यूटर मय आपरेटर उपलब्ध कराने का कार्य। 5. ई-निविदा संख्या- 170/ SE/ EDCH/ 2019-20: कार्य का विवरण: विद्युत वितरण मण्डल हमीरपुर की सीमान्तगत विद्युत चोरी निरोधक थाना हेतु कुल 02 नग कम्प्यूटर मय आपरेटर उपलब्ध कराने का कार्य। "राष्ट्रीय हित में बिजली बचाये" हस्ता. (सुमित व्यास), अधीक्षण अभियन्ता

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY निरस्तीकरण पत्र निविदाओं को देशव्यापी जनता कर्मचारी के कारण निरस्त किया जाता है। 1) 217-221/NIT/SLR/Leasing/20: खुलने की तिथि- 20.04.2020. 2) 222-238-NIT-NFR-2020: खुलने की तिथि-(222-230) 23.04.2020, (231-238) 24.04.2020. 3) 239-241-NIT-NFR-PBGM-20: खुलने की तिथि- 27.04.2020. इन निविदाओं के खुलने की अगली तारीख की सूचना शीघ्र प्रकाशित की जाएगी। वरिष्ठ मंडल वाणिज्य प्रबंधक 334-AJ/20 खतर परिवर्धन रेलवे, जोधपुर

GOVERNMENT OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER :: PHE & WS DIVISION ZIRO NOTICE INVITING TENDER Dated Ziro, the 20th March 2020 The Executive Engineer, PHE & WS Division, Ziro on behalf of the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh invites sealed item rate tender as per District Based Entrepreneur and Professional Act 2015 from eligible and approved contractors registered with APPWD, CPWD, NEEPCO, NHPC and BRO for the work tabulated below under NESIDS/BE. Table with columns: SI No., Description of work, Amount Put to Tender, Earnest Money, Time of Completion, Last Date & Time (Receipt of Application, Issue of Tender Document, Submission of Tender Document), Date & Time Of Opening of Tender, Remarks. 1. Design, Construction and implementation of "Water treatment Plant 6.32 MLD Capacity" Rs. 7,13,98,000/-, Rs. 7,13,98,000/-, 24 Months, 30th March 2020 Up to 1400 Hrs., 2nd April 2020 Up to 1400 Hrs., 7th April 2020 Up to 1200 Hrs., 7th April 2020 at 1400 Hrs.

HLL Lifecare Limited (A Government of India Enterprise) CIN: U25193 KL 1966 GOI 002621 HLL Bhavan, Poojappura, Thiruvananthapuram- 695 012, Kerala, India. Tel: +91 471 2354949 EMERGENCY PROCUREMENT OF VENTILATORS (COVID - 19) Tender No. HLL/SD/RBD/2019-20/TENDER/15 DTD 05.03.2020 Amendment No 5 HLL Lifecare Ltd., a Mini Rata PSU under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India invites bids from the interested manufacturers / distributors for the supply of VENTILATORS as part of COVID - 19 Emergency Procurement. The tender is already published in our website www.lifecarehll.com for emergency procurement of various items. The details for ventilators along with specifications can be seen as per Amendment No. 5. You may kindly refer the above website and may participate in the tender. You may also provide your url to below email ids: sdcovidep.hll@lifecarehll.com, sdcovidep.hll@gmail.com (Kindly continue to visit the above website for any updates / additional products as part of COVID-19 Emergency Procurement) In case of any clarification with respect to this tender you may contact the following officers: Mr. Aswin AS, Manager (Sourcing), Mob. 9400027975 Mr. Vinod G Pillai (Vice President-Sourcing), Mob: 7824001017 Vice President (Sourcing)

and safety of healthcare providers. Likewise, all other SAARC countries shared their own experiences of dealing with the challenge in their respective settings, the statement said. The countries also highlighted their specific vulnerabilities, capacities, best practices, gaps in resources and logistics, private sector participation and levels of preparedness, it added. "The enthusiastic and constructive participation by all SAARC member states demonstrated the shared commitment to work together to defeat the challenge posed by the coronavirus epidemic," the MEA stated.

## SIMPLY PUT QUESTION &amp; ANSWER

# RBI opens window to defer EMIs: here's the deal

Amid lockdown, RBI has permitted banks to allow a 3-month moratorium on term loan repayments. But this is not a waiver — and banks will take the final call

**SUNNY VERMA & SANDEEP SINGH**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

AMID THE lockdown caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the Reserve Bank of India has permitted banks to allow a moratorium of three months on the payment of instalments for all term loans outstanding as on March 1, 2020. Accordingly, the repayment schedule and all subsequent due dates, as also the tenure for such loans, may be moved forward across the board by three months.

However, the decision on the rescheduling of home, auto, and other loans will finally be taken and conveyed to customers by individual banks. Banks will continue to charge interest on the outstanding portion of the term loans during the moratorium period. The RBI has left it to the boards of banks to put in place an objective criteria to offer moratorium to its customers.

A moratorium is not a loan waiver and does not offer any discount on interest payout. But it provides stressed customers extra time to repay without their accounts being labelled non-performing assets (NPA) or their credit score being affected.

### Who can avail of these benefits?

Individuals and companies who have availed term loans — such as home loans, car loans, corporate loans — can benefit from this move. Therefore, any temporary disruption

in their income or cash flows caused by the lockdown will not affect their repayment schedule for the next three months, at least. The moratorium facility is now available on term loans extended by all commercial banks — including regional rural banks, small finance banks and local area banks, co-operative banks, and all-India financial institutions. Even term loans extended by Non-Banking Finance Companies, including housing finance companies and micro finance institutions, will benefit from the move. The head of a leading housing finance company said, "The RBI announcement covers all retail, non-corporate loans, across all the categories."

### What all does the moratorium cover?

The moratorium will be applicable on both principal and interest. The proportion of principal will depend upon the age of the loan, whether it's the first EMI for a customer or, say, the 100th. During the life of a loan, the amount of interest decreases while the principal component increases as the loan amortisation progresses. In a circular to banks on Friday, the RBI stated instalments that can be covered in the moratorium include principal and interest components, bullet repayments, EMIs as well as credit card dues on all types of term loans. Any person who is running credit card dues due to a medical exigency or any other reason can also get a three-month relaxation. The move



Those whose cash flows have dried up could get temporary relief. *Praveen Khanna*

may benefit many small and medium enterprises that use personal credit cards for their businesses.

### Will interest get accrued over these three months?

Even if your bank allows you to not pay your home loan or car loan instalment due for the next three months, it is important to

note that interest will continue to accrue on the outstanding portion of the loan during the moratorium period. Experts say that borrowers who are not stressed for funds, and are getting their monthly salaries, should continue to pay their EMIs as scheduled rather than opt for the moratorium, which will cost additional interest for three months. If you are not stressed for funds and

you opt for the moratorium, while you will earn an interest at a rate of around 4 per cent per annum in your savings bank account, you will accruing interest at around 9 per cent per annum.

### Will borrowers be provided an option?

Bankers say they are still working on the categories of customers who will be eligible for the three-month moratorium. Once that is finalised, they will contact their customers and ask them if they want to opt for the moratorium benefit or continue to pay their EMIs as scheduled. So, borrowers who want to continue to make their payments will be able to do so. But the moratorium facility will provide a major relief to customers whose cash flows may be disrupted by loss of business or jobs due to the lockdown.

### What are the benefits for the customer?

While the moratorium does not provide any monetary relief or a waiver to customers, it basically means that non-payment during the next three months will not affect the credit history of the customers and their accounts will not be tagged as Non-Performing Assets (NPAs). This is a major relief to borrowers as loan accounts turning into NPAs can subject them to recovery actions by the banks and lending institutions.

### Do companies benefit?

For corporate India, too, this is a signifi-

cant relief, especially for those companies that have low cash reserves. As cash flows get impacted across the board for companies, many of them may not have the ability to repay loans, as businesses have shut down completely. This will provide them with some breathing space. For banks and lending institutions, this will affect cash flows as they may not get repayments for three months. To compensate for this loss of liquidity, the RBI has reduced their cash reserve ratio (CRR) requirements. A prudential measure, CRR is the slice of deposits that banks are required to keep with the central bank.

### Are these measures expected to lift the economy?

While the decisions have been taken to protect individuals and businesses from the negative impact of the virus and the lockdown on the economy, experts feel that if these measures are complemented by further fiscal stimulus measures by the central and state governments to support demand in the economy, then it will help credit off-take. Separately, the government is also working on other measures that will directly benefit industry. The aviation industry, for example, which is particularly battered by disruption, is likely to get a relaxation in payment of statutory dues including taxes. The government plans to allow them to make payments in a staggered manner without any penalty or interest.

# Ahead: bumper crop, multiple challenges

**HARISH DAMODARAN**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

THIS IS perhaps the first time ever that India is facing a national disaster or a war-like situation — Prime Minister Narendra Modi evoked memories of "blackout drills" in his first address on combating the novel coronavirus — amidst plentiful supplies of food as a bumper *rabi* crop beckons.

Farmers are currently about to harvest — if they haven't already — wheat, mustard, *chana* (chickpea), *matar* (field pea), potato, onion, garlic, *zeera* (cumin seed), coriander, fennel, red chilli, grapes, mango, summer tomato and other seasonal fruits and vegetables. Given the surplus and extended monsoon rains, which helped recharge ground water and fill up reservoirs, a superabundant produce is round the corner. This comes even as there is demand destruction from the shutting down of HORECA (hotels, restaurants and catering) and other institutional segment businesses following the nationwide lockdown.

It raises the possibility of a crisis similar to the one three years ago that followed demonetisation. But the scale, it is feared, could be bigger. The post-demonetisation *rabi* crop, also a bumper one, was at least harvested and marketed even if it didn't fetch a good price.

### How to transport produce

This time, there are doubts being raised

even on that. The simple reason for it is: Will farmers, labourers and machines (combines, threshers and tractor trolleys) be able to move freely to harvest the produce and take it to the *mandis*?

The Uttar Pradesh government on Thursday issued a direction to all district administrations and law-enforcement authorities to exempt all services, including labour, that are involved in agricultural production, processing and marketing from the current lockdown provisions. Other states, too, may follow. But the question remains: How will these directives be implemented on the ground? Would farmers or labourers be asked to produce proof and does that, in turn, open a new avenue for police harassment?

### Will there be workers?

At the second stage comes the *mandis*, where marketing of the crop would happen. Here again, there is a possibility of shortage of labour (the people who do unloading, cleaning, bagging and reloading of the grain that is auctioned or sold) and even gunny bags. Further, it would be necessary to prevent crowding, and maintain social distancing. One way out could be to allow entry only to a limited number of farmers, who may be issued SMS alerts informing them about the date and time to bring their crop. Each farmer can also be given a maximum quantity — say, one tractor-trolley load of 30-40 quintals — that may be brought in a

single day. The permission for the next trolley load will be only after other farmers have got their turn to sell.

All this will obviously delay the process of marketing, raising the prospect of panic sales. This could be avoided if the government were to give a clear-cut assurance — at least in respect of crop where there is minimum support price-based procurement — that it will continue buying till the last grain is offered.

Besides, the marketing of produce needn't be limited to the APMC (agricultural produce market committee) *mandi* yard. Any flour or *dal* mill, and even primary school premises can be designated as an APMC marketing area. The objective should be to ensure that the farmer's produce gets marketed without resulting in overcrowding.

### Beyond the *mandi*

Once marketing is done, the crop has to move beyond the *mandi*. This is probably the right time to dismantle all inter-state and intra-state movement restrictions in farm produce. Free movement is necessary in the context of both a bumper crop and the ongoing lockdown.

The risk of shortages today is really not in the metros or state capitals. The food and civil supplies departments in states will ultimately ensure that the terminal markets in these centres — whether Azadpur in Delhi, Vashi in Mumbai, or Koyambedu in Chennai

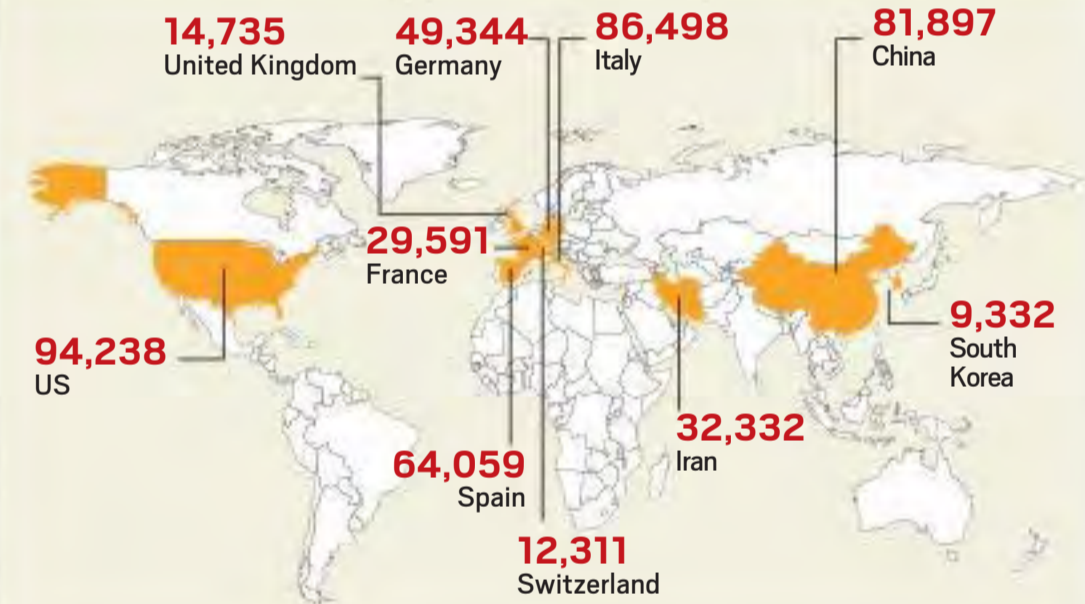
— receive their required daily flow of produce. The problem will be in the remote towns and the rural hinterlands that are serviced through upcountry APMCs. The grocers there are at the greatest risk of running out of stocks if the lockdown continues without inter-state movement restrictions in agricultural commodities being removed. As Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi has pointed out, "We get rice from West Bengal, pulses from Katni and Satna in Madhya Pradesh, and mustard oil from Rajasthan".

The difficulty for trucks to run long hauls during the lockdown arises not just from being stopped at every check post, or being held up at state borders. It arises also from the fact that roadside restaurants or *dhabas* that cater to the drivers are no longer operating. But this again can be partly managed by using the spare wagon capacity that exists with the Railways today. With passenger trains not running, and no demand for moving goods either, more rakes can be deployed for long haul transport of agri produce. These goods trains can be sent faster now to reach remote areas, so that the wholesale traders there can seamlessly supply to local grocers.

All these steps will have to be taken fast in a situation where agriculture and making food available to homebound citizens would be the only worthwhile economic activity till the battle against COVID-19 is won.

## CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED DAILY



TOTAL CONFIRMED: 576,859 DEATH COUNT: 26,455

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11pm on March 27

## Can alternative medicine work against the coronavirus?

**ABANTIKA GHOSH**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

THERE HAVE been multiple advisories from the AYUSH Ministry on COVID-19. Its long list of recommendations include Unani concoctions Sharbat Unnab and Tiryaaq Arba, and the homeopathic medicine Arsenicum Album 30 for post-exposure prophylaxis for doctors and caregivers.

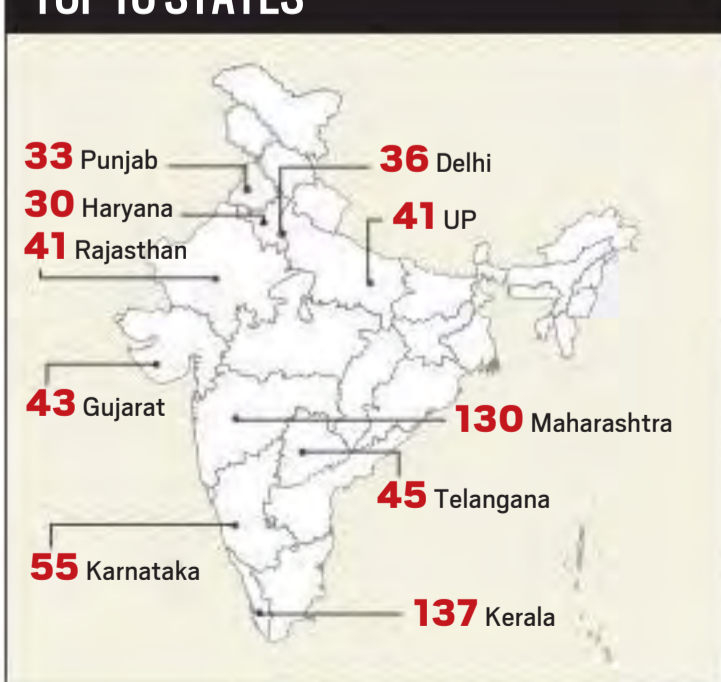
In the absence of a scientifically proven cure or preventive for novel coronavirus infection, should one use alternative medicine? This is what the World Health Organization has to say: "While some western, traditional or home remedies may provide comfort and alleviate symptoms of COVID-19, there is no evidence that current

medicine can prevent or cure the disease. WHO does not recommend self-medication with any medicines, including antibiotics, as a prevention or cure for COVID-19. However, there are several ongoing clinical trials that include both western and traditional medicines."

Doctors are discouraging use of drugs recommended by practitioners of alternative medicine because a drug has to be developed keeping in mind its safety and efficacy. For hydroxychloroquine pushed by the Health Ministry, the efficacy is still being investigated — but its safety has been documented through years. No such data are available for any of the traditional 'remedies' on social media. The virus that causes COVID-19 is new — and its nature is still being studied by scientists.

## INDIA COUNT: 724 (17 DEATHS)

### TOP 10 STATES



### REST OF INDIA

Andaman and Nicobar Islands	1
Andhra Pradesh	12
Bihar	6
Chandigarh	7
Chhattisgarh	6
Goa	3
Gujarat	43
Himachal Pradesh	3
J&K	13
Ladakh	13
Madhya Pradesh	20
Manipur	1
Mizoram	1
Odisha	2
Puducherry	1
Tamil Nadu	29
Uttarakhand	5
West Bengal	10

Union Health Ministry update at 11 pm, March 27. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states with most cases are listed above.

67 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 12 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:explained@indianexpress.com)

## AN EXPERT EXPLAINS

# How India is building up defence during lockdown



ASHUTOSH SHARMA

THE 21-DAY lockdown is likely to only delay largescale transmission of novel coronavirus in India, not eliminate it completely, most experts say. This time, therefore, needs to be utilised to build up defences, ramp up health infrastructure, and prepare for the worst case scenario. In fact, this exercise is already on.

### How is the scientific community gearing up to meet the COVID-19 challenge?

This battle against the spread is being fought at multiple levels. From our side, we are trying to find solutions that can broadly be put in three categories — science, technology and information technology. On the science side, we are making efforts towards development of cheaper test kits, for example, and there are efforts towards vaccine development and repurposing of drugs. On the technology side, we are looking at products that are needed by the patients or healthcare professionals. And there is a third stream as well, where we need to come up with effective information-based products on this disease.

So, what are the things that need to be delivered urgently?

Let me start with technology. The Technology Development Board recently made a call for proposals from SMEs (small and medium enterprises) and start-ups for products that will be useful in the current situation. There can be a range of such products. I will give one example. If the numbers (of infected persons) become very high, there is likely to be a rush for finding ventilators. Now, one company has proposed a product that is like a splitter. It will enable more than one patient to simultaneously use a ventilator.

I would also be interested in seeing whether alternative models for ventilators can be developed that are simpler to operate. Such equipment might be needed to be installed in large common facilities, for example, if the number of infected patients really blows up. Similarly, we have need for blood oxygen monitors. These are available in the market but are expensive. If some company can produce it at a cheaper rate, it could be very useful.

So we have made a call-out to companies, saying if you have products that are close to manufacturing, and they would be useful in the current situation, we (government) are ready to support it. In fact, we have already found close to 60 start-ups that have useful products in advanced stages of development.

### What is being done on the science side?

On the science side too, a call has been made through the Science and Engineering Research Board, asking for research proposals on COVID-19. We will begin screening of these proposals from March 30, though the proposals can keep coming even after that.

Here again, we are expecting to see some very specific outputs. One example could be development of inexpensive test kits. Now, some private companies have already been approved to do this, but there is a need for scaling up. We are looking at test kits that are priced below Rs 500.

Then, all efforts that will contribute towards vaccine development would be supported and put on the fast track. The same would be the case with groups working on developing therapy, or on repurposing of existing drugs. In fact, one group in Bengaluru has done some encouraging work on repurposing of drugs for this disease, in combination with a private company with expertise on artificial intelligence. Similarly, limited clinical trials on drugs that are approved elsewhere will be funded and fast-tracked.

While we are seeking proposals, we are, in parallel, also mapping who is doing what, and we will reach out to them.

### What kind of help can information technology offer?

There are many needs. Just as an example, we need someone to develop information dashboards for Indian context, say by integrating data about where the concentration of infected people are. Then, a lot of useful websites and apps, chatbots, can be developed.

### How big is the risk of the disease spreading among very large populations?

All possible measures are being taken to contain the spread, but you also have to remain prepared for every eventuality. That is

why we are working across different streams to bring ourselves in a situation where we can respond quickly and effectively to any eventuality.

### What does one make of mathematical models that predict millions in India can get infected?

These mathematical models work on a number of assumptions. Most of these are based on robust science. Also, they adjust dynamically, and are sensitive to lots of parameters. For example, behaviour of people can be a critical input. Whether people can be persuaded to do a certain thing in a particular way rather than the other way is something that will alter the calculations. These things would need to be captured in the models. The impacts that government measures would have — isolation, social distancing — would also affect the model output. In fact, we are hoping to see some good research proposals on modelling as well. We would support them.

### How much money has been allocated for supporting such science and technology initiatives?

As an emergency measure, we have kept aside Rs 100 crore. By the time this gets exhausted, we will be in the next financial year and look for more. It all depends on the absorption capacity of the industry and scientific groups. If we get good proposals, funding would not be a problem.

Ashutosh Sharma is Secretary, Department of Science and Technology. He spoke to **Amitabh Sinha**

R KELLY SEEKS RELEASE
R&B singer R Kelly has cited the novel coronavirus in asking a federal judge to free him from a federal jail in Chicago as he awaits trial on child pornography and other charges.



TOP OF THE WORLD

US has most infections as virus tightens grip

BERNARD GONDON, DAVID RISING & NICOLE WINFIELD
NEW YORK, MARCH 27

US CORONAVIRUS infections surged to top the world amid warnings that the pandemic is accelerating in cities like New York, Chicago and Detroit, while a record \$2.2 trillion emergency package received final approval Friday by Congress to help millions of newly unemployed Americans and struggling companies.

The massive bill, also passed by the Republican-controlled Senate late on Wednesday, now goes to Republican President Donald Trump who is expected to promptly sign it into law.

The US now has more than 86,000 confirmed cases. Analysts, however warned that all those infection figures could be low for reasons that varied in each nation.

"China numbers can't be trusted because the government lies," American political scientist Ian Bremmer, president of the Eurasia Group think-tank, said Friday in a tweet. "US numbers can't be trusted because the government can't produce enough tests."

New York state, the epicenter of the US outbreak, reported 100 more deaths in one day, accounting for almost 30% of the 1,300 fatalities nationwide. AP



US President Donald Trump leaves after addressing the coronavirus task force daily briefing as Dr Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, stands by, at the White House in Washington. Reuters/Jonathan Ernst

More than 900 deaths in a day in Italy; UK PM tests positive

DAVID RISING, MATT SEDENSKY & JILL LAWLESS
LONDON, MARCH 27

DEATHS SURGED in Italy and Spain on Friday, troubling new outbreak sites bubbled in the United States, and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson became the first leader of a major country to test positive for the coronavirus that has sickened more than a half-million people worldwide.

Italy recorded its single biggest rise in deaths, with 969 more victims, to bring its total number of fatalities to 9,134.

Meanwhile, Johnson's office said he was tested after showing mild symptoms for the coronavirus and is self-isolating and continuing to lead Britain's response to the pandemic. "Be in no doubt that I can continue, thanks to the wizardry of modern technology, to communicate with all my top team, to lead the national fightback against coronavirus," Johnson said in a video message, adding that he had a temperature and persistent cough.

British Health Secretary Matt Hancock, who has been at the forefront of nation's response to the outbreak, also was confirmed



Boris Johnson joins a national applause to salute health workers in London. AP/PTI

to have the virus. Britain has 11,658 confirmed cases of the virus, and 578 people have died.

Spain's Health Ministry reported another 7,800 infections overnight for a total of 64,059. Deaths climbed by 769 to 4,858 — the world's second highest total after Italy's 8,214 fatalities.

Spain says 9,444 health workers have contracted the coronavirus. That's nearly 15% of the total number of cases.

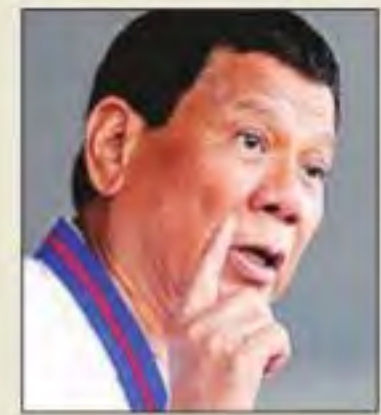
"It's true that we have more deaths than what we saw yesterday, but it's also true that the percentage increase today is similar to that of the past three days and it

EXPLAINED Test for EU solidarity

ANGER HAS mounted in Italy against the European Union over the delay in the announcement of financial measures to tackle the crisis. EU leaders discussed the issue on a video conference but failed to reach consensus. They did not back Italy's suggestion for a common debt instrument to tackle the outbreak. The crisis has now become another test for EU solidarity.

appears there is a stabilization," said Fernando Simon, the head of Spain's health emergency coordination center.

Epidemiologists warn that Italy's numbers are likely much higher than reported — perhaps by five times — although two weeks into a lockdown the daily increase seems to be slowing, at least in northern Italy. AP



Philippine president met officials who were exposed to those with coronavirus. AP file

PHILIPPINES Duterte in self-quarantine

Manila: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte will quarantine for more than a week after meeting officials who were exposed to people with the coronavirus. Sen. Christopher Lawrence Go said Duterte will go into quarantine Saturday, the president's 75th birthday, to April 7. He will continue working in his residence at the presidential palace in Manila. A test cleared Duterte of the COVID-19 illness two weeks ago. But he has since had meetings with Cabinet members and other officials who have been exposed to infected people.

China, US must unite to fight virus: Xi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA BEIJING, MARCH 27

CHINA AND the United States should "unite to fight" the deadly coronavirus pandemic, President Xi Jinping said in a call with Donald Trump on Friday, as he called for the US to improve relations.

The two countries have clashed in recent weeks over the virus, and Chinese state media said Xi told Trump he hoped the



Chinese President spoke to Trump on Friday

"US will take substantive actions to improve Sino-US relations". He also called for the two countries to work together to tackle the virus and said Beijing "wishes to continue sharing all

information and experience with the US", according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Trump sounded a positive tone, tweeting that he had a "very good conversation" with Xi, and that both leaders discussed the pandemic "in great detail".

Trump and his Secretary of State Mike Pompeo angered Beijing this month by repeatedly referring to "the Chinese virus" when discussing the COVID-19 outbreak.

YEMEN USAID declares aid suspension

Beirut: As countries across the Middle East tighten restrictions on movement to curb the spread of the coronavirus, a spokesman for the US Agency for International Development said Thursday that it would suspend humanitarian aid to parts of Yemen over restrictions by the Houthis rebels that predate the pandemic. Yemen, reeling from the world's worst humanitarian crisis after five years of war, has not yet reported a case of the coronavirus. But the suspension by USAID threatens to leave the country even more vulnerable to contagion.

UGANDA Cops shoot 2 for violating ban

Kampala: Ugandan police said on Friday that two men were in hospital after being shot for violating restrictions on transport in a bid to curb the spread of coronavirus. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has urged people to stay home but has stopped short of ordering a lockdown. Schools, places of entertainment and worship and some agricultural markets have been shut for a month and people have been banned from using public transport, and being more than three to a car, or one on a private motorbike. AGENCIES

Indonesia nod to lockdowns after biggest surge in a day

STANLEY WIDIANTO, BERNADETTE CHRISTINA & TOM ALLARD JAKARTA, MARCH 27

INDONESIA'S CHIEF security minister Mahfud MD said on Friday the national government would allow regional authorities to impose lockdowns to control the coronavirus, in a major shift in strategy after previously resisting tougher restrictions.

The security chief also said the government was mulling a plan to ban "mudik" — the practice that sees millions of Indonesians leave towns and cities for their native villages at the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan in May.

The change of tack came after Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation, announced on



A woman stands inside a sterilisation chamber at the airport, in Surabaya. AP

Friday its biggest one-day surge in coronavirus cases, up 153 to 1,046.

Indonesia's government has previously been reluctant to embrace stricter containment strategies of other nations, and President Joko Widodo's policy has been to encourage social distancing while not imposing tighter restrictions on movement. REUTERS



LOCKDOWN BEGINS IN SOUTH AFRICA

A soldier gestures to a homeless man, in Johannesburg, South Africa announced its first two deaths from the coronavirus Friday as the country's cases rose above 1,000 and a three-week lockdown began, with military patrolling and police screaming at the homeless on quiet streets. Reuters/Siphwe Sibeko

Pak opens border with China as cases rise to nearly 1,300

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ISLAMABAD, LAHORE, MARCH 27

PRIME MINISTER Imran Khan on Friday announced to create a special volunteer force to help fight the coronavirus outbreak which has infected 1,298 people as Pakistan opened its borders with all-weather ally China for a day to accept much needed medical supplies.

The number of coronavirus patients in Pakistan has reached to 1,298, according to the latest data. There were 440 patients in Sindh, 419 in Punjab, 131 in Balochistan, 176 in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP), 103 in Gilgit-Baltistan, 27 in Islamabad and 2 in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. So far, nine patients have died, 23 recovered and 7 others are in critical condition.



Imran Khan announced a special volunteer force

Interacting with the media after meeting of the National Core Committee on the coronavirus, Khan said that registration for Corona Relief Tiger Force will begin on March 31.

Meanwhile, China was providing critical medical supplies to Pakistan and the Khunjerab pass between the two countries was opened on Friday to let the goods enter Pakistan, according to the Chinese embassy in Islamabad.

Russia confirms case in Putin's administration, tightens curbs

TOM BALMFORTH & ALEXANDER MARROW MOSCOW, MARCH 27

THE KREMLIN confirmed a coronavirus case in President Vladimir Putin's administration on Friday and the government said measures imposed in Moscow to fight the virus should be extended across Russia.

The official tally of confirmed cases jumped by a record daily amount for the third day in a row, bringing Russia's total to 1,036. Four people have died of the coronavirus.

The Kremlin said it was taking measures to stop the virus spread-



Kremlin said the person had not come into contact with Putin

from those selling food and medicine, until April 5. International flights have been suspended.

On Friday, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said measures in place in Moscow to halt the spread of the virus should be imposed across the country and urged Russians to stay at home and refrain from all but essential trips.

An opinion poll by the Moscow-based Levada Centre showed the majority of Russians, some 59 percent, do not believe the official figures. Twenty-four percent said they "absolutely" did not believe them and 35 percent said they only partially believed them, the poll showed. REUTERS

In Iran, rumour that alcohol fights virus kills hundreds

ASSOCIATED PRESS TEHRAN, MARCH 27

STANDING OVER the still body of an intubated 5-year-old boy wearing nothing but a plastic diaper, an Iranian health care worker in a hazmat suit and mask begged the public for just one thing: Stop drinking industrial alcohol over fears about the new coronavirus.

The boy, now blind after his parents gave him toxic methanol in the mistaken belief it protects against the virus, is just one of hundreds of victims of an epidemic inside the pandemic now gripping Iran.

Iranian media report nearly 300 people have been killed and more than 1,000 sickened so far by ingesting methanol across the Islamic Republic, where drinking alcohol is banned and where those who do rely on bootleggers.

An Iranian doctor helping the country's Health Ministry told The Associated Press on Friday

the problem was even greater, giving a death toll of around 480 with 2,850 people sickened.

The poisonings come as fake remedies spread across social media in Iran, where people remain deeply suspicious of the government after it downplayed the crisis for days before it overwhelmed the country.

"Other countries have only one problem, which is the new coronavirus pandemic. But we are fighting on two fronts here," said Dr. Hossein Hassanian, an adviser to Iran's Health Ministry who gave the higher figures to the AP.

"We have to both cure the people with alcohol poisoning and also fight the coronavirus." The Islamic Republic has reported over 29,000 confirmed cases and more than 2,200 deaths from the virus, the highest toll of any country in the Middle East. International experts also fear Iran may be under-reporting its cases, as officials for days played down the virus ahead of a parliamentary election.



A temporary 2,000-bed hospital for coronavirus patients set up by the Iranian army at the international exhibition centre in northern Tehran. AP/PTI

Migrant farmworkers whose harvests feed Europe blocked at borders

LIZ ALDERMAN, MELISSA EDDY & AMIE TSANG PARIS, MARCH 27

WHEN EUROPE tightened its borders to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, France's biggest farmers sounded an alarm: The workers they rely on from other countries to harvest much of the nation's food could no longer make the trip.

The concern is widespread. In Britain, farmers are struggling to find people to pick raspberries and potatoes. Part of Germany's prized white asparagus crop risks rotting in the ground. And in Italy, over a quarter of the strawberries, beans and lettuce ripening in coming months may

lack harvesters.

European governments have declared food supplies a matter of national security as millions flock to supermarkets to brace for prolonged home confinement. But border lockdowns have immobilized legions of seasonal workers from Eastern Europe who toil in fields from Spain to Sweden, forcing a rapid rethink of how to supply labor to those farms.

France's agriculture minister this week trumpeted what sounded like a surreal call for hairdressers, waiters, florists and others temporarily unable to work at their mothballed businesses to head to the nation's fields and start picking. "I'm calling on this shadow

army, on the many men and women who want to work," Didier Guillaume, the minister, said on BFM television Tuesday. "We have to produce to feed the French."

Europe isn't about to run out of food. Truckloads of pasta, tomatoes and other goods continue to cross the continent, with bottlenecks at some borders. But the widening clarion call to citizens underscores an uncomfortable reality: Without low-cost mobile labor from Eastern Europe, the breadbaskets of Europe's wealthier economies risk losing their harvest.

Malte Voigts grows the creamy pale asparagus celebrated in Germany as "white gold" and harvested each spring



Romanian migrant workers, who arrived before the borders closed, on Malte Voigts' farm in Kremmen, northwest of Berlin. Gordon Welters/NYT

to much fanfare. But as the days grow warmer and stalks begin peeking from the mounds of earth on the farm he runs in Kremmen, 30 miles northwest of Berlin, he and neighboring farmers are struggling with limited numbers of seasonal workers and more stringent housing conditions to allow for social distancing.

Normally he relies on a workforce of about 170 mostly Romanian workers for the asparagus harvest. Right now, about half that number are on hand, most of them having arrived before Czech Republic and Hungary blocked travel through their countries.

Germany's agriculture sector relies on 300,000 seasonal

workers to plant and harvest produce throughout the spring and summer. Like many growers in Brandenburg state, where about 24,000 tons of asparagus is raised each year, Voigts said he would need more people for the high season, which starts in late April.

Hoping to fill the gaps, he put out a call for help on his company's website. "Hundreds of people have called in, even a mother, saying her two teens could help out — which we don't allow," he said. "I almost get goose bumps."

Thousands of Germans have also logged on to a national website offering to help farmers or nurseries needing workers. The jobs pay the German minimum

wage of 9.35 euros (about \$10.25) an hour — the same wage paid to foreign harvesters. But with only 16,000 applicants so far, the agriculture minister has urged the government to also grant refugees who have not qualified for a work permit the right to help in the fields.

Until this week, seasonal workers who could bypass travel restrictions and get to the German border would be allowed in. But on Wednesday farmers faced a further squeeze after the Interior ministry announced that Germany would ban all seasonal workers from entering the country, citing concerns by the public that they could bring the coronavirus with them. NYT

# 13 ECONOMY

<b>GOLD</b>	<b>RUPEE</b>	<b>OIL</b>	<b>SILVER</b>
₹41,705	₹74.89	\$26.15	₹38,100

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

SENSEX: 29,815.59 ▼ 131.18 NIFTY: 8,660.25 ▲ 18.80 NIKKEI: 19,389.43 ▲ 724.83 HANG SENG: 23,484.28 ▲ 131.94 FTSE: 5,512.52 ▼ 303.21 DAX: 9,624.95 ▼ 376.01

International market data till 1900 IST

## RBI ANNOUNCES TLTRO, 100 BPS CUT IN CRR AND HIKE IN MSF TO TACKLE COVID-19 FALLOUT

# ₹3.74 lakh cr booster to stabilise financial system

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU**  
MUMBAI, MARCH 27

THE THREE liquidity measures — namely targeted long-term repo operations (TLTRO), cash reserve ratio (CRR) cut of 100 basis points and the increase in marginal standing facility (MSF) to 3 per cent of the statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) — announced by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will pump Rs 3,74,000 crore to stabilise the financial system hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. This huge liquidity injection into the financial system should help financial institutions and flow of funds to the real economy, bankers said. “The large rate cut, adjustment in capital conservation buffer, moratorium on repayments and the bazooka of conventional CRR cut and unconventional liquidity measure of incentivising banks to support the commercial paper market, all will help financial markets stabilise, lead to immediate rate transmission and address the credit needs of the real economy,”

### SBI passes 75 bps cut by RBI on to interest rates on loans, deposits

Mumbai: Hours after the RBI slashed repo rate and cash reserve ratio, State Bank of India Friday cut the interest rates on loans and deposits. The bank passed on the entire 75 bps repo rate cut to its borrowers availing loans linked to external benchmark linked lending rate (EBR) as well as repo linked lending rate (RLLR). From April 1, EBR will be down to 7.05 per cent per annum from 7.80 per cent. SBI has cut RLLR to 6.65 per cent per from 7.40 per cent. Consequently, EMIs on eligible home loan accounts (linked to EBR or RLLR) will get cheaper

said State Bank of India Chairman Rajnish Kumar.

The TLTRO of up to three-year tenor of appropriate sizes for a total amount of up to Rs 1,00,000 crore will be at a floating rate

over and above the outstanding level of their investments in these bonds as on March 27,” RBI said. Banks will be needed to acquire up to 50 per cent of their incremental holdings of eligible instruments from primary market issuances and the other 50 per cent from secondary market, including from mutual funds and NBFCs.

The reduction in the CRR would release primary liquidity of about Rs 1,37,000 crore uniformly across the banking system in proportion to liabilities of constituents, rather than in relation to holdings of excess statutory liquidity ratio (SLR). This dispensation will be available for a period of one year ending March 26, 2021.

Taking cognisance of hardships faced by banks in terms of social distancing of staff and consequent strains on reporting requirements, the RBI decided to reduce the requirement of minimum daily CRR balance maintenance from 90 per cent to 80 per cent effective from the first day of the reporting fortnight beginning March 28. Under the MSF, banks

can borrow overnight at their discretion by dipping up to 2 per cent into the SLR. In view of the exceptionally high volatility in domestic financial markets which bring in phases of liquidity stress and to provide comfort to the banking system, it has been decided to raise the limit of 2 per cent to 3 per cent with immediate effect.

This measure will be applicable up to June 30, 2020, the central bank said. This is intended to provide comfort to the system by allowing it to avail an additional Rs 1,37,000 crore of liquidity under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) window in times of stress at the reduced MSF rate announced in the Monetary Policy Committee’s resolution.

The RBI also decided to widen the existing policy rate corridor from 50 bps to 65 bps in view of persistent excess liquidity. Under the new corridor, the reverse repo rate under the LAF would be 40 bps lower than the policy repo rate. The MSF rate would continue to be 25 bps above the policy repo rate, the Reserve Bank said.

### EXPLAINED Focus on liquidity to aid real economy

BANKERS ARE hopeful that the huge amount of liquidity injection into the financial system would help financial institutions and boost flow of funds to the real economy. The stock markets and the rupee have been showing volatile movements in the last three weeks amid the sell-off in global markets. Foreign investors have pulled out over Rs 1 lakh crore from equity and debt markets in March so far.

## Despite objections by own panel, RBI allows banks in NDF market

**GEORGE MATHEW**  
MUMBAI, MARCH 27

THE RESERVE Bank of India has decided to permit banks in India, which operate International Financial Services Centre Banking Units (IBUs), to participate in the non-deliverable forward (NDF) market with effect from June 1, 2020. The RBI took the decision despite the recommendation by a task force set up by it against allowing banks in the NDF market. “Banks may participate through their branches in India, their foreign branches or through their IBUs,” the central bank said. NDFs are foreign exchange derivative instruments on non-convertible or restricted currencies traded over the counter (OTC), mainly at offshore centres outside the direct jurisdiction of the respective national authorities.

The Task Force on Offshore Rupee Markets, set up by the RBI, had proposed that Indian banks should not be permitted to deal in the offshore rupee derivative market — or the NDF market — for the present as the downside of per-

### The Usha Thorat-led panel had said the downsides of letting banks into NDF market outweigh the benefits

mitting them to deal in this market outweighs the advantages.

The NDF market has been growing rapidly in recent times. Currently, Indian banks are not permitted to participate in it, although the benefits of their participation in the NDF market have been widely recognised. “All aspects of the issue have been examined in detail and a consensus has emerged in the RBI that the time is apposite to remove segmentation between the onshore and offshore markets and improve efficiency of price discovery,” the RBI said.

SBI Chairman Rajnish Kumar said the decision is a positive step in broadening the market participants and better rate discovery.

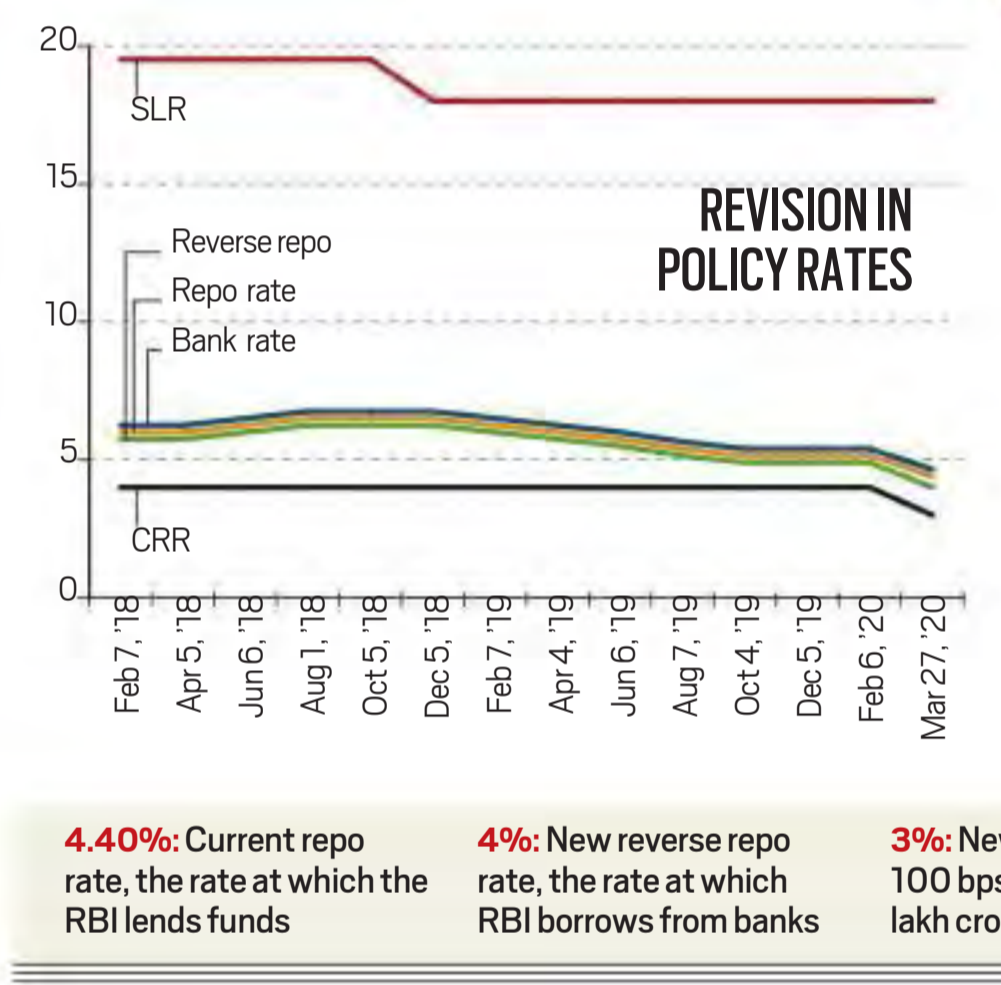
However, the panel, in its report in August last, had recommended extension of onshore

market hours to improve access of overseas users and permit Indian banks to freely offer prices to global clients around the clock. “Onshore rupee derivatives market is currently more deep and liquid as compared to the offshore rupee market and participation of Indian banks in the offshore market might, over time, take away this advantage,” the panel headed by former RBI deputy governor Usha Thorat said. The sharp growth in offshore trading volumes in the rupee NDF market in recent years, even beyond the volumes in onshore markets, had raised concerns around the forces that are determining the value of the rupee and the ability of authorities to ensure currency stability.

The panel, which submitted its report on July 30, 2019 to the RBI, examined the causes of the underlying growth in the overseas NDF markets and identification of measures to reverse the trend. The task force had proposed rupee derivatives (settled in foreign currency) to be traded in the International Financial Services Centers (IFSC) in India, to begin with on exchanges in the IFSC.

## To keep credit flowing, RBI uses ‘array of instruments’

The Reserve Bank of India on Friday slashed the repo rate by 75 basis points to 4.40 per cent, cut cash reserve ratio by 100 bps to 3 per cent and announced a three-month moratorium on loan repayments, stating that “the time has come to unleash an array of instruments from its arsenal to staunch and mitigate the impact of COVID-19”



**4.65%:** New bank rate, the rate at which banks borrow from RBI without any security  
**4.2 MPC DECISION:** Monetary Policy Committee members Ravindra H Dholakia, Janak Raj, Michael Patra and Shaktikanta Das voted for a 75 bps reduction in repo rate. Chetan Ghate and Pami Dua voted for a 50 bps cut  
**MARKETS & REGULATORS:** Market participants should work with regulators like the RBI and Sebi to ensure orderly functioning of markets in their role of price discovery and financial intermediation

## ON WARFOOTING

### Sebi eases procedure for public issuance

New Delhi: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) on Friday eased operational procedure for public issuance, including initial share-sale and acquisition of shares under takeover norms, in the wake of the 21-day lockdown to contain spread of COVID-19. **PTI**

### Lockdown to shave 2 ppt off growth: OECD

Paris: Each month major economies spend in lockdown will knock 2 percentage points (ppt) off annual growth, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said on Friday.

## Moody’s cuts 2020 growth forecast to 2.5% from 5.3%

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

MOODY’S ON Friday trimmed its growth projection for India sharply to just 2.5 per cent for 2020 from 5.3 per cent reported earlier, which is lower than its forecast of 3.3 per cent for China, the epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic. The global rating agency has forecast a 0.5 per cent contraction for the global economy in 2020, citing an unprecedented demand compression.

India’s growth, however, could rebound to 5.8 per cent in 2021, while China’s may accelerate to 6 per cent, Moody’s said.

Meanwhile, Ibra, too, trimmed its growth projection to 4.2 per cent for financial year 2020-21 from 4.4 per cent, despite the support from agriculture and government spending. **FE**

## Sensex ends in red on RBI forecast Wall Street snaps 3-day rally; oil continues to fall

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU**  
MUMBAI, MARCH 27

THE BENCHMARK Sensex on Friday plunged 1,300 points intraday and closed lower by 131 points after the Reserve Bank of India said the projected annual growth was at risk due to the coronavirus outbreak and measures announced by the central bank.

Though Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das unveiled a slew of measures, the markets were not enthused. The growth projection of 4.7 per cent for the fourth quarter of FY20 and 5 per cent for the whole fiscal was at risk, Das said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex, which hit a high of 31,126, pared all the gains to end 131.18 points or 0.44 per cent lower at 29,815.59. The broad-based NSE Nifty closed 18.80 points, or 0.22 per cent, higher at 8,660.25.

Meanwhile, the rupee pared its initial gains to settle 27 paise higher at 74.89 against the US dollar on Friday.

**REUTERS**  
WASHINGTON/LONDON, MAR 27

US STOCK indices fell sharply at the open on Friday, following the S&P 500 and the Dow’s best three-day run in nearly a century, as fears about the economic damage from the rapidly spreading coronavirus returned to the forefront.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 653.70 points, or 2.90 per cent, at the open to 21,898.47. The S&P 500 opened lower by 74.20 points, or 2.82 per cent, at 2,555.87. The Nasdaq Composite fell 243.29 points, or 3.12 per cent, to 7,554.25 at the opening bell.

Oil prices fell Friday as demand destruction caused by the COVID-19 outweighed stimulus efforts by policymakers around the world and as the US faced the prospect of becoming the next global epicentre of the pandemic. Brent crude was down \$1.26

or 4.8 per cent, at \$25.08 a barrel by 1336 GMT. US crude was down 84 cents, or 3.7 per cent, at \$21.76.



Crowds standing at some distance from each other at a Sainsbury’s outlet in London, Friday. Reuters

Both contracts were on track for a fifth consecutive weekly drop. They are down nearly two thirds this year and the coronavirus-related slump in economic activity and fuel demand has forced massive retrenchment.

## World already in recession, says IMF chief

**REUTERS**  
WASHINGTON, MARCH 27

THE CORONAVIRUS has already plunged the global economy into recession, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Friday, adding immense pressure on emerging markets suffering from lost commerce, reduced exports and massive capital outflows. Georgieva told a news conference that emerging market countries need at least \$2.5 trillion in financial resources to get through the pandemic.

Internal reserves and borrowing in local markets will be insufficient to cover these needs, so substantial funding from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), other institutions and bilateral creditors will be necessary. Georgieva said IMF was focused on ensuring that funding is available on concessional terms to its poorest members.

## FY20 DIVESTMENT MOP-UP AT ₹48,728.06 CR Stake sale of THDCIL, NEEPCO, Kamarajar Port fetches govt ₹13,883 crore

**ENSECONOMIC BUREAU**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

IN A bid to shore up its disinvestment kitty ahead of the end of the fiscal, the Centre on Friday raised Rs 13,883 crore through strategic sale of its stake in two state-owned power companies, THDCIL and NEEPCO, and Kamarajar Port Ltd to other state-owned entities. This takes the Centre’s total collections from disinvestment at Rs 48,728.06 crore so far in FY20.

The government has revised its disinvestment target down to Rs 65,000 crore from Rs 1.05 lakh crore for the current fiscal. It has sold 74.49 per cent stake in THDC India Ltd (THDCIL) for Rs 7,500 crore and 100 per cent in NEEPCO for Rs 4,000 crore to state-owned power utility NTPC. Further, the Centre sold 66.67 per cent in Kamarajar Port Ltd to Chennai Port Trust for Rs 2,383 crore.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs had, last November, given in-principle approval for the sale of government’s stake in North Eastern Electric

Power Corporation (NEEPCO) and THDCIL, along with transfer of management control to NTPC.

Prior to these sales, the Centre had raised Rs 34,845.06 through disinvestment, of which Rs 4,368.80 crore was raised through follow on offer of Bharat 22-ETF and another Rs 26,500.39 through more tranches of CPSE ETF.

Exchange-traded funds (ETFs) have been the main sources of fundraising for the government. Among the other stake sales this fiscal, the Centre has raised Rs 63,977 crore through initial public offering (IPO) of IRCTC, Rs 475.89 crore through IPO of RVNL and Rs 730.33 crore via offer for sale of RITES shares. For the upcoming fiscal’s budget, the government has announced an ambitious disinvestment agenda, aiming to raise Rs 2.1 lakh crore via stake sales, including plans to list Life Insurance Corporation on stock exchanges and sale of its stake in IDBI Bank. Privatisation of BPL, Container Corporation of India, Shipping Corporation of India and national carrier Air India will be other key issues next year.

## Can sell BS-IV vehicles for 10 days after lockdown, but not in Delhi-NCR: SC

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

TAKING INTO account the efforts to contain the COVID-19 spread, the Supreme Court Friday allowed automobile dealers 10 more days after the 21-day lockdown ends to sell 10 per cent of the unsold stock of vehicles made to Bharat Stage IV (BS-IV) pollution standards. Hearing a plea by the Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA) via video conferencing, a Bench of Justices Arun Mishra and Deepak Gupta, however, said such vehicles could not be sold in Delhi-NCR.

“In Delhi-NCR region, we are not allowing sale and registration of these kind of vehicles any more. However, in the remaining part of the country, due to the situation which has arisen due to lockdown, it is ordered that not beyond 10 per cent of the vehicles,

except with dealers in Delhi-NCR region, are permitted to be sold out of the aforesaid number of vehicles to make up the good of six days which were available before the lockdown has been ordered in the country”, the bench stated.

It ordered that “details of sale shall be furnished by the applicant and there shall be no violation of the order”, adding that the sale should be done “within ten days of the lifting of the lock-down operating in the concerned cities and not beyond it.” FADA, through senior advocate KV Vishwanathan sought a 30-day extension, contending that given the prevailing situation, there would be bankruptcies and job losses if this was not done. However, the court was not inclined to grant the relief.

The apex court had earlier set a deadline of March 31 for sale and registration of BS-IV vehicles as the BS-VI norms would come into effect from April 1, 2020.

## ICAI issues guidance for financial reporting, auditing taking into account COVID-19

**KARUNJIT SINGH**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

THE REGULATOR for the accounting profession, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), on Friday issued an accounting and auditing advisory, with guidance on incorporating the impact of disruptions caused by COVID-19 on financial reporting and auditing.

The note provides guidance to companies and auditors on measuring impairment of assets, evaluating contingent liabilities and the ability of business to remain operational. Experts said the advisory was timely and that auditors would have a major role to play in evaluating the going concern status of companies in the current scenario.

“There is a need to advise the preparers of financial statements to ensure that the potential im-

pact of COVID-19 is suitably considered in preparing and reporting their financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2020,” said the guidance note.

The guidance note has also called on companies to evaluate whether they will be able to continue as a going concern.

“In the current scenario, while making this (going concern) assessment, management would generally be expected to prepare detailed forecasts which will require regular update till the financial statements are authorised for issue,” the guidance noted.

“Those preparing and auditing accounts will have a major role to play in evaluating various aspects including revenue recognition, valuation of financial instruments and assessing going concern assumptions, in discussions with the management,” said Kaushal Kishore, partner at accounting firm BSR & Co.

## Saudi Arabia, Russia differ on new OPEC deal

Moscow/Dubai: Saudi Arabia said it was not in talks with Russia to balance oil markets despite rising pressure from the US to stop a price rout amid the pandemic and an attempt by Moscow to fix a rift with the OPEC leader. A senior Russian official said on Friday that a larger number of oil producers could cooperate with OPEC and Russia, in an indirect reference to the United States, the world’s biggest producer which has never cut production. **REUTERS**

## From hours to minutes: Taking road less travelled to speed up COVID-19 test results

**PRABHA RAGHAVAN**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

IN A quiet biosafety lab at the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute’s (THSTI) leafy Faridabad campus on the outskirts of the national capital, glass flasks of varying sizes, stuck on green mats and filled with pink liquid have been rotating anti-clockwise, “shaking” non-stop in an incubator for days.

These flasks are growing cells containing synthetically-made copies of the novel coronavirus (SARS-COV-2), and the protein produced here will help THSTI make two diagnostic tools it hopes will speed up testing for



At THSTI, diagnostic tools are being developed that could be a significant addition to India’s resources to test for the spread of the virus.

COVID-19 disease going forward. The first one is a rapid diagnostic tool called ‘alisa’, which

will measure antibodies to the SARS-COV-2 virus using a test that uses chemically-produced DNA or RNA molecules, known as aptamers. The second test is a point-of-care tool similar to a glucometer that THSTI hopes doctors can use to check for COVID-19 in their patients within a span of 20-30 minutes.

The tools might be a significant addition to the country’s resources to test for the spread of the virus. They deviate from the real-time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) tests recognised as the gold standard for COVID-19 testing, but the institute hopes to make them up to 95 per cent accurate, so the government sees merit in their use. Under THSTI

executive director Dr Gagandeep Kang’s guidance, work on these tools have been on since January through collaboration of protein biochemist Dr Tripti Shrivastava and biotechnology researcher Dr Tarun Kumar Sharma.

“We have people with a fair amount of expertise looking at developing a point of care diagnostic,” says Dr Kang, adding it will “certainly” have to go through “a lot of testing and validation before it can be approved for use here. At THSTI’s HIV Vaccine Translational Research Lab, Dr Shrivastava’s job has been to create, for these diagnostic tools, what she calls, a “valid target” — a representation of the protein that exists on the surface

of the virus. “In case of actual infection, these are the surface proteins, which inside the body basically generate the antibodies,” Dr Shrivastava explains.

Once the protein is ready, expected this week, Dr Sharma and his team will get cracking on it with the alisa technology. This consists of experiments using a “huge” aptamer library to find the one molecule that would bind with the protein samples to detect the virus most accurately.

“It is like you have a bunch of keys (the aptamers) and, from those keys, you have to fish out the one that can open the lock (the one that helps detect the viral protein the best),” he explains. The institute hopes samples

can be tested within five hours using a colorimetric assay technique — the aptamer and other reagents would be added into several tubes containing the samples using a pipette. A few hours later, if the samples are yellow, this means the patient has COVID-19.

Unlike the government’s PCR procedure followed so far, a second test would not be required to confirm this, according to Dr Sharma. Once perfected, this would be used to create the point-of-care diagnostic, making it possible for doctors treating fever patients to screen for COVID-19 in half an hour.

If done right and on time, THSTI’s aptamer based tests may

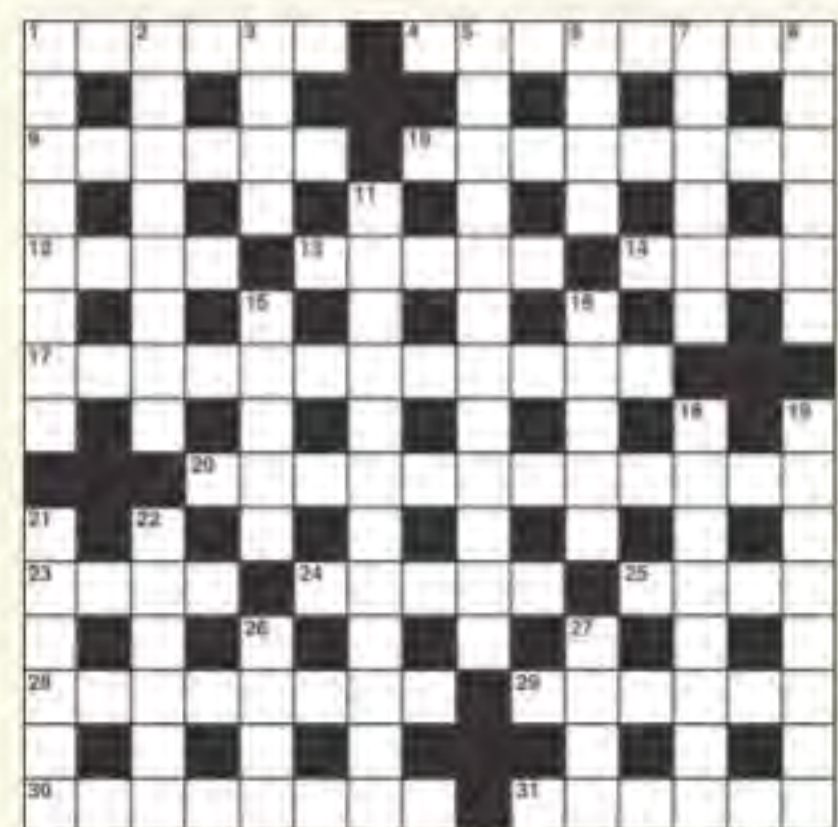
be the first of their kind in rapidly detecting COVID-19.

The World Health Organization has recommended RT-PCR and serological tests (analysing blood serums) for detecting the contagious virus.

“I’m guessing there would be several others working on aptamers (for testing COVID-19) now and it depends on who will get off the ground fastest. It’s not about who’s first,” says Dr Kang.

It is crucial to move beyond RT-PCR tests because they would have “very little value” in the event people with positive antibodies to the virus (meaning they have COVID-19 but their immune system has tackled the virus) are tested, according to her.

## CROSSWORD 4077



- ACROSS**
- Mavis has a throat infection (6)
  - Debit one transferred following orders (8)
  - Initially a king; possibly raise to an emperor (6)
  - These resorts are highly attractive (8)
  - Last form of preservative (4)
  - Number making do with Japanese Buddhism (5)
  - Formerly part of a population census (4)
  - Counterfeiting next year's coins and prospering (7,5)
  - Successful writer who may take his place with pride (8,4)
  - A boy of four getting nothing right (4)
  - One is quick to make it (5)
  - Chain letters? (4)
  - Harbour reputed to be one in the Middle East (4,4)
  - Ships turn back, waiting for the wind? (6)
  - As an occupant I'd resent being put out (8)
  - More than usual intemperance (6)
- Down**
- Removes and copies (5,3)
  - Rare lily found broken in the chaff (8)
  - Check the front of the ship (4)
  - Possibly the bankers or philanderers produce them (6,6)
  - Finished? Then I accept the offer (4)
  - She may turn out to be Eastern alien (6)
  - Minded being watched (6)
  - Those in service go on reacting strangely (12)
  - Drop a note (5)
  - Wood spirit (5)
  - Gilbert and Sullivan's stagecraft (8)
  - Methodical examination of dissected snail, say (8)
  - A lad who pinches (6)
  - Gets on the stage (6)
  - So this is pickled and not allowed to go to waste (4)
  - Top primate gets the vote (4)

**Solutions Crossword 4076:** Across: 1 Tarry, 4 Compass, 8 Oaf, 9 Laterally, 10 Press on, 11 Heats, 13 Sphere, 15 Calves, 18 Corks, 19 Chimney, 21 In command, 23 Ugh, 24 Abridge, 25 Stern. Down: 1 Troopes, 2 Refresher, 3 Yells, 4 Oting, 5 Morphia, 6 Awl, 7 Styes, 12 Adventure, 14 Resumed, 16 Say when, 17 Scrape, 18 China, 20 Indus, 22 Car.

## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



## CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



## JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

The most important thing about power is to make sure you don't \_\_\_\_\_ - Edwin H. Land (4,2,3,2)

HVAEE                      AGHTTU

ERIOS                      ABEEHV

SOLUTION: HEAVE, OSIER, TAUGHT, BEHAVE

## SUDOKU 4162

**Difficulty Level 4s**  
**Instructions**  
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.



**Difficulty Level**  
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

## SOLUTION SUDOKU 4161



## DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

### ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

The current planetary picture focuses on profound long-term developments rather than day-to-day ups and downs. Today, you have every opportunity to force the pace and you must expect partners to keep up with you. You'll have to decide just how hard someone needs to be pushed.

### TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Do you really wish partners to dance to your tune? You must be aware that, if they do so, they may become dependent on you and even impose certain unwelcome expectations on you in the future. Perhaps you are still not ready for such an increase in responsibility. If not, then you have to find a way to explain yourself.

### GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

As so often happens these days, planetary pressures were stronger during the week than at the weekend. This is precisely why you must not allow yourself to be bullied or bamboozled today. Next week is an ideal moment for getting new enterprises and initiatives going, so wait a few days.

### CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Strong influences on imaginative regions of your chart draw your attention to the benefits of travel and the maintenance of overseas contacts. You have every reason to take advantage of all opportunities to get away from home. There's nothing wrong with making an escape!

### LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Something seems to be drawing you towards a deeper influence in dubious financial activities. Please do not do anything you will later regret, and don't allow yourself to be swayed by over-optimistic friends. What seems to be most likely is that somebody who has let you down will repent.

### VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Domestic affairs may consume too much of your time. However, if you pay careful attention to various comings and goings, you may rearrange family plans to suit your own feelings and interests. Intimate relationships will benefit from a dose of your good, old-fashioned commonsense.

### LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

A number of planets are bringing lively and interesting conditions, and there's a definite chance that a new activity might lead to a serious opportunity later. Do not be slow to put your ideas forward, because it looks as if there may be some cash rewards.

### SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

If you're in a restless mood, it is time to think about travel plans. Only you know how much stimulation you gain from improvements in your environment and exposure to different cultures. And, also, you should get family finances in order without delay.

### SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 23)

Planetary movements look encouraging, although there seems to be little to stimulate you. This is one of those days when you must rely on your own motivation and make your own entertainment. If you're looking for a financial bonus, then check out a family connection.

### CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

A flash of inspiration may show the way out of a legal or bureaucratic morass, you'll be pleased to hear. However, in the event of a misunderstanding you must be prepared to give a partner the benefit of the doubt. They have done wrong, but they need your understanding.

### AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

If you've been concentrating on career issues, try taking stock today. The success of a particular partnership is a very important consideration, perhaps more so than financial rewards. In love, it's companionship that counts, and your partner should be your best friend.

### PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

There may be strange events around the home, perhaps the mysterious loss of a valuable item. However, any confusion will be cleared up soon, so don't panic. All in all, you must count this a successful period, and you can afford to congratulate yourself.

**Bharat Coking Coal Limited**  
"A Mini Ratna Company"  
(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)

**E-Tender Notice**

Open E-Tender No. BCCL/AMP/WD/2020-04 Dtd.: 20.03.2020  
Estimated cost (Crore): Rs. 2.19 for "for Hiring of Service New Bolero/Sumo/equivalent with Two Drivers due date of opening on 13.04.2020 have been uploaded on website: <https://coalindiatenders.gov.in> of CIL. All prospective bidders are advised to visit aforesaid website for participation against this tender. Full details of this tender is available on website <https://coalindiatenders.gov.in>

Area Personnel Manager  
Washery Division

**UJVN LIMITED**  
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006  
Telephones: 0135-2763808, & Fax: 0135-2783508  
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866

**Time Extension Notice-I**

In reference to e-Tender No. 19/EE(M)/Klg/2019-20 invited by this office, it is to inform that due to unavoidable reasons dates of the tender are extended as below and time extension notice has been uploaded on e-procurement portal. Please quote your bids accordingly. For further details kindly log on to <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>. All other terms & conditions of tender shall remain unchanged.

- Last Date/Time for receipt of bid in the portal : 17.04.2020 up to 16.00 Hrs.
- Last date of submission of original documents : 18.04.2020 up to 16.00 Hrs
- Date of opening of bid on the website : 20.04.2020 at 11.00 Hrs

पत्रांक 174 दिनांक 26.03.2020  
Executive Engineer (Maint.)

" Avoid wasteful use of Electricity "

**GOVERNMENT OF CHHATTISGARH,**  
WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER  
HASDEO CANAL W/M DIVISION,  
JANJGIR- CHAMPA  
DIST. JANJGIR-CHAMPA(C.G.)  
e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE  
eProcurement Portal: <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>  
(SECOND-CALL)  
**CORRIGENDUM NO. 1**

Following corrigendum is issued against NIT No. 27/SAC/2019-20, Dated: 06.03.2020, System No. 61815, G.No.-77729 Dt. 07.03.2020 & NIT No. 28/SAC/2019-20, Dated: 06.03.2020, System No. 61816, G.No.-77730 Dt. 07.03.2020. In the aforesaid tenders, the amendment is done in the earlier circulated date as follows-

S. No.	Particulars	Previous Published	Read as
1.	<b>Bid Start date &amp; time</b> (The date and time from which bidders start preparation/ submission of their bid response, before this bidder's action will not be allowed)	13.03.2020 (17.31)	13.03.2020 (17.31)
2.	<b>Bid Due date &amp; time</b> (The last date & time for submission of bid response, after which no bids can be submitted.)	23.03.2020 (17.30)	07.04.2020 (17.30)
3.	<b>Bid Open, Start date &amp; time</b> (The date of opening of Envelope- A & B online)	24.03.2020 (11.30)	08.04.2020 (11.30)

All Other Terms and Conditions of NIT will remain unchanged.  
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER  
HASDEO CANAL W/M DIVISION  
JANJGIR-CHAMPA  
R.O. No.-G-78185

**NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY**  
OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE  
Divl. Rly. Manager, Engineering, N.W.Railway, Jaipur for and on behalf of President of India invites open E-tender for the following works upto 15.30 hours on the date shown as below:- Sr. No 1. Name of work with location- ENGG-JP-2020-21-10 (S) ADEN(RPC)/JP Sub Divm. Out sourcing of maintenance activities to provide habitable conditions under ADEN(RPC). Approx Cost of work- 2744346/-; Earnest money Rs.- 54900/-; Sr. No 2. Name of work with location- ENGG-JP-2020-21-11 (S) GTJT- Providing technical services for maintenance and operation of Civil assets/systems & Maintenance of Horticulture work provided at PHOD Colony Jagatpura (Period for 24 months). (Two Packet system); Approx Cost of work- 8263981/-; Earnest money Rs.- 165300/-; 1. Other terms & condition will be shown on N.W.Rly website- [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). No any manual tender will be accepted. 2. Payment of earnest Money deposit (EMD) & tender document cost (TDC) in respect of E-tendering should be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only.) The payment is to be made in favour of FAR&CAO, NWR, Jaipur, other wise tender will not be considered. 3. Detail is available on N.W.Rly website- [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) and Notice Board in WA section, DRM Office, NWR/Jaipur. 4. Tender No. ENGG-JP-2020-21-10(S) to ENGG-JP-2020-21-11 (S) is to be closed on 20.04.20 at 15.30 hrs and opened on 20.04.20 at 16.00 hrs. 335-AJ/20  
Contact help line no. 139 for general complaints

**VISVESVARAYA JALA NIGAM LIMITED**  
(A Government of Karnataka Enterprises)  
Office of the Executive Engineer, VJNL, U.B.P Division no.3, Ajjampura-577 547. CIN No. U41000KA2016SGC097260  
NO: EE/VJNL/UBP/D-03/Ajjampura/PB-1/T/Lelectrical/Tender Notification/2019-20/1567 Dated: 21.03.2020

**SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION**  
(TWO-COVER SYSTEM) (Through e-Procurement Portal Only)  
Name of work: Providing 11KV power supply to 14 no zonal pumping stations coming under Package 1 of Tarikere Lift Irrigation Scheme. (I No: VJNL/2019-20/PS/WORK\_INDENT1442). App. amount put to tender (Rs. In Lakhs): 991.34 EMD (Rs. In Lakh): 9.95 Category of the Agency: KPTEL super grade license contractors and KPWD Class I contractor. Time Limit: 06 Months (Including monsoon).  
Further details and information about electronic tendering can be had from <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in/eprocurement>.  
Calendar of Events: (1) The contractor can access to the e-tender document, i.e. the tender schedules, bid documents and other documents, in the web site <http://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> on payment of transaction fee (non-refundable) from: Date- 24.03.2020, after 11.30 hours. (2) Last date & time for tender queries/ clarifications: Date- 30.03.2020, upto 17.00 hours. (3) Pre bid meeting will be held at o/o the Chief Engineer, VJNL, UBP Zone, Chitradurga: Date- 01.04.2020, at 11.30 hours. (4) The last date for submission of completed tender documents (Cover-1 & cover-2) through e-portal.: Date- 08.04.2020, upto 16.00 hours. (5) Date & time of opening of Technical Bid (Cover -I) by Executive Engineer, V.J.N.L, UBP, Division No.3, Ajjampura.: Date-09.04.2020 at 16.30 hours.  
Sd/- Executive Engineer,  
VJNL, UBP, Division No.03, Ajjampura.

**GOVERNMENT MEDICAL COLLEGE, HALDWANI-263139 (Nainital) (U.K.), TENDER NOTICE**

The principal Government Medical College Haldwani invite bid/offer from the Manufacturer or its Authorized dealer/ Authorization firm for this for procurement of DG in the context of COVID-19 on Emergency basis, the Bidder submit there detail offer along with the delivery schedule. the detail offer must contain the Name, Model, catalogue, technical Specification with standard attachment, warrantee information, quality certification such as ISO 13485, GST registration, Aadhar No/Pan Card No, Purchase Copy of government Institution/Medical College etc Description item Supply Installation, testing and Commissioning 15 KVA DG Set with Canopy Enclosure 415 Volt, 50Hz, 3phase input and 3 phase output -01 set complete.  
The bidder who ready stock and able to supply the DG 15 KVA, within 03 days from the release of Purchase order are allowed to bid/offer the bidder are submit there offer such as equipment details.

Sl. No.	Equipment Name	Make/Model	Unit price including GST	Date & Nene of Government institute (Where Supply)	Govt. Work order No. (Where Supply)
1					

The Bid offer Should be submitted either E-Mail or by Hand by 11.30 AM 30.03.2020 office of Principal Government Medical college Haldwani - Telephone no. (05946) -255255 & 255926 & Fax no. (05946) - 282578.  
Sd/- Principal  
Advt.no. 147 Electric indent/GMC -J10/ 27/03/2020

**SRI JAYADEVA INSTITUTE OF CARDIOVASCULAR SCIENCES & RESEARCH**  
(Govt. of Karnataka - Reg. Autonomous Institute)  
9<sup>th</sup> Block, Jayanagar, Bannerghatta Road, Bengaluru-560 069  
Ph:080-22977666 / 276 / 216 / 217 / 433, Fax: +91-080-26534477 / 22977278  
E-mail. [director@jayadevacardiology.com](mailto:director@jayadevacardiology.com), [sjicrprojectengineer@gmail.com](mailto:sjicrprojectengineer@gmail.com)  
Website : [www.jayadevacardiology.com](http://www.jayadevacardiology.com)

**CORRIGENDUM TO e-TENDER NOTIFICATION NO. SJICR/TS/54/2020-21 DT. 07.02.2020**

Construction of New 300+ Bedded Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences & Research Hospital Complex including required Engineering & Hospital Services at Humnabad Road, Kalaburagi, Karnataka.

Sl. No.	As already notified	To be read as
1	Date of pre-bid meeting : 30.03.2020 at 11.30 AM at SJICR, Bengaluru.	Date of pre-bid meeting : 30.04.2020 at 11.30 AM at SJICR, Bengaluru.
2	The last date for submission of tenders through e-portal is 28.04.2020 at 4.00 PM	The last date for submission of tenders through e-portal is 15.05.2020 at 4.00 PM
3	Date of Technical Bid Opening : 29.04.2020 at 4.00 PM	Date of Technical Bid Opening : 16.05.2020 at 4.00 PM

If bidders have any queries/clarifications, please mail your letters to E-mail ID : [director@jayadevacardiology.com](mailto:director@jayadevacardiology.com) and [sjicrprojectengineer@gmail.com](mailto:sjicrprojectengineer@gmail.com)  
For further details, please log on to <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>

Sd/-  
Chief Administrative Officer.

**Development Support Agency Of Gujarat (D-SAG)**  
An autonomous Society promoted by Tribal Development Department, Government of Gujarat

**E-Tender Notice No. VKY/2017/2261/D-SAG CORRIGENDUM**

Development Support Agency of Gujarat (D-SAG) invites e-tender from intending bidders for implementing of Project implementing Agency for "Selection Agency For GPSC Class-1, 2 & 3 Preliminary Coaching in ITDP Areas of Gujarat." The tender document can be downloaded from the website [www.dsag.gujarat.gov.in](http://www.dsag.gujarat.gov.in) and [www.nprocure.com](http://www.nprocure.com) from 27/03/2020, 15.00 Hours onwards.

**Tender Document:**

No	Particular	Tender Document	Revised Terms
1	Notice Inviting Tender Page No. 2	Last Date & Time for Receipt (Physical Submission) of Bids 30/03/2020 by 06:00 hours	Last Date & Time for Receipt (Submission) of Bids 20/04/2020 by 06:00 hours
2	Notice Inviting Tender Page No. 2	Physical Submission of certain documents, etc. Submission of EMD, Tender fee and other Documents as specified in the tender document 30/03/2020 up to 06:00 hours in the office of the Chief Executive Officer, Development Support Agency of Gujarat, Block 8/2, New Sachivalay, Gandhinagar - 382010	Submission of certain documents, etc. Submission of EMD, Tender fee and other Documents as specified in the tender document 27/04/2020 up to 06:00 hours in the office of the Chief Executive Officer, Development Support Agency of Gujarat, Block 8/2, New Sachivalay, Gandhinagar - 382010
3	Notice Inviting Tender Page No. 2	Date of Tender opening : 31/03/2020 by 00:00 hours	Date of Tender opening : 28/04/2020 by 11:00 hours

**Note :** You are requested to kindly visit our website for more details [www.dsag.gujarat.gov.in](http://www.dsag.gujarat.gov.in) and [www.nprocure.com](http://www.nprocure.com)

Sd/-  
Chief Executive Officer  
Development Support Agency of Gujarat  
Gandhinagar  
INF/2648/19-20

# 15 SPORT

**Before this crisis started to unravel, we were absolutely determined for our guys to play the IPL. Because with the T20 World Cup coming up, there's no better grounding, no better practice, no better tournament for them to get ready for that."**

**JUSTIN LANGER**  
AUSTRALIA COACH

## The All England dilemma: Cancellation or postponement?



Crammed as the calendar is, it would be difficult to find a slot for Wimbledon. AP

**AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE**  
LONDON, MARCH 27

THE All England Club will hold an emergency meeting next week to discuss the possible postponement or even cancellation of Wimbledon in the light of the coronavirus pandemic. The key questions facing the organisers:

**What are the options for this year?**

Wimbledon, which is scheduled to take place from June 29 until July 12, has been staged every year in peace time since 1877, shelved only during the two world wars. However, the spread of the coronavirus has brought havoc to the 2020 global sports calendar. Tennis is at a standstill until June 7 with the entire European claycourt season already wiped out. Roland Garros, traditionally the season's second Grand Slam of four, has been rescheduled

from its traditional late May-early June slot to September 20-October 4.

The grass court season is relatively short, five weeks for the leading events, so Wimbledon would appear to have time on their side. However, building and preparation work at the All England Club site takes two months to complete and is set to start at the end of April. There is also the issue of when the coronavirus will peak. By Thursday, there had been 170 fatalities in London alone with 578 nationwide. Around 9,500 people have been infected so far in the United Kingdom. Health is the top issue for an event which attracts not only the superstars of the sport, but also close to 500,000 spectators as well as 6,000 staff and around 3,200 accredited media.

**Why can't it be played later?**

A slot has opened up in the calendar after the postponement of the Olympics until next year. However, Wimbledon organisers know

that a postponement by a just fortnight to take advantage of that opening would solve little. It would also mean running into the build-up to the US hardcourt season, the precursor to the August-September US Open in New York. "At this time, based on the advice we have received from the public health authorities, the very short window available to us to stage The Championships due to the nature of our surface suggests that postponement is not without significant risk and difficulty.

**What would be the financial implications of a cancelled Wimbledon?**

The tournament is an annual money-spinner. For example, in the 2017-2018 fiscal year, it was reported that Wimbledon generated \$336 million with a pre-tax profit of \$52 million. Over 90 percent of that was ploughed into British tennis. The BBC, which broadcasts Wimbledon, will have a two-week black hole if the event is called off.

**Who would be the losers of a cancelled Wimbledon?**

As well as the purely sporting implications of a binned Wimbledon, Britain's well-heeled would suffer a jolt to their busy summer social season. The Henley Royal Regatta on the River Thames, a feature since 1839, has already been cancelled. Wary eyes will now be cast towards June's Royal Ascot, which has drawn British royalty and the cream of society since 1911. The British tabloids would also be stripped of their two-week Wimbledon headline bonanza and celebrity fix. 'Meghan Markle's Wimbledon hair is a look she rarely wears' or 'Meghan Markle's Wimbledon outfit draws backlash' were particular diversions in 2019. Also into cold storage will go the dependable, 'Game, sweat and match', dusted off every time the sun drives up the temperatures in London. And farewell to the 'gruntometer', that notorious low-tech gadget employed by the red-tops to categorise the on-court Wimbledon shrieks.

## Ganguly is BCCI's man at ICC board meeting

**SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY**  
KOLKATA, MARCH 27

SOURAV GANGULY became the BCCI's representative at the ICC Board, as the global body held its Board meeting via teleconference on Friday. Ganguly's induction into the ICC Board came on traditional lines that the BCCI president would represent his country at the game's highest body.

There had been speculations about whether former BCCI and ICC chief N Srinivasan would be representing India at the ICC Board. Eventually though, the tradition has been followed. BCCI secretary Jay Shah would be the Indian board's representative at the ICC's Chief Executives' Committee. "Sourav Ganguly was welcomed as the BCCI representative on the ICC Board, whilst Cricket Australia and the Local Organising Committee were thanked for their efforts in staging the successful, historic and inspiring ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2020," the ICC stated in a press release.

As expected, the ICC Board meeting today didn't discuss the major issues like reworking the ongoing World Test Championship or the future of the T20 World Cup to be held in Australia in October-November. Given the current situation because of the coronavirus pandemic, a postponement appears likely, with Australia closing its borders for non-citizens and non-residents for six months.

**ICC elections**

It is learnt that today's meeting dealt with the urgent matters like clearing the accounts, required for the Annual Conference in July. This paper understands that the ICC might go into an election to pick a new independent chairman in July, as the incumbent, Shashank Manohar, is unlikely to run for a third term. The Board meeting also cleared the budget for the ICC Women's World Cup in New Zealand next year. The release of advance payment of \$23.7 million to the BCCI for hosting the ICC events has been referred to the ICC's Disputes Resolutions Committee.

With regards to the future of the ICC events against the backdrop of the Covid-19 outbreak, ICC chief executive Manu Sawhney said: "The ICC management will continue our contingency planning around ICC events and will also work with Members to explore all options available to us based on a range of scenarios connected to the pandemic."

## 'People are dying, life comes first'

PV Sindhu talks about her life in self-quarantine, and why sport is trivial in these testing times

**MIHIR VASAVDA**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

FOR AS long as she can remember, PV Sindhu has started her days even before the sun has risen. Training and playing in big arenas; jumping, leaping, smashing, sweating. Never a still moment. And never alone.

The last few days have been quite the opposite for the 24-year-old: confined to her room, waking up 'really late', not even touching her playing kit, following news and on a streaming spree. How else do you beat the boredom? On some days, she amuses herself by watching various 'challenges' sportspersons are taking up on social media.

The other night, she watched the Hollywood thriller *Contagion* and like many who have rediscovered the 2011 hit in the last few weeks, Sindhu, too, has been blown away by the eerie resemblance the movie bears to the Coronavirus pandemic.

"There has never been a period like this," Sindhu, who has been in self-quarantine after returning from Birmingham earlier this month, says. "It's been 12 days now that I have not left my room." In isolation. But not cut off.

With all the time she has, Sindhu has been closely following the outbreak of Covid-19. She rattles off the timelines and trajectories of the virus spread in different countries, the measures taken by countries and statements made by some leaders. Sport, in these trying times, seems rather trivial to her.

"It's good that they are cancelling all tournaments, even the Olympics," Sindhu says.

Majority of Indian athletes have reacted with mixed emotions to the International Olympic Committee's decision of pushing forward the Tokyo Games until next year. For Sindhu, a silver medalist from the Rio Games, postponing the Olympics was the most obvious choice. Not just because athletes' training plans have been disrupted because of the global lockdown but Sindhu says this isn't the time to play purely because of the gravity of the current situation.

"Every week, every day, the numbers have been increasing," Sindhu, who has donated Rs 5 lakh each to the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana relief funds, says. "People have been telling me, 'this was your dream... now the Olympics are postponed.' But life comes first, then the Olympics."

The words 'life comes first' play on a loop during the conversation. As on Friday, the virus has claimed more than 25,000 lives and had spread in 200 nations. "So I don't think it was a bad decision to postpone (the Olympics) because we don't have any other choice. People



PV Sindhu, who has not left her room in 12 days, watched the movie *Contagion*, which is about a virus outbreak. File

are dying out there. Life comes first."

For athletes, the deferment ended a period of uncertainty but has thrown up other challenges. In an interview with the Associated Press, swimming legend Michael Phelps spoke about the mental health issues athletes may have to face because of the delay. Wrestler Vinesh Phogat, an Asian Games gold medalist, underlined the possible difficulties in recalibrating the training programmes so as to peak at the right time.

**Tricky time**

Athletes 'work backwards from the goal period' to peak, according to high-performance sports consultant Ross Tucker. Since the rescheduled dates have not yet been announced (the IOC is reportedly considered to hold it in spring or summer next year), it may get tricky to design training programmes so the uncertainty, in a way, continues to persist. But Tucker - who has worked with World Rugby, the US and British Olympic associations, among others - says most athletes will prefer a 'full-year postponement'.

"It's easier to absorb that into the normal annual cycle of training where you have your rest period, a pre-season, the build, the competition, the peak. Plus, there are better chances to compete along the way," Tucker says in an email.

Sindhu concurs. It will force her to alter her short-term plans and readjust workloads but other than that, the 'delay is not a big thing' for her. "Of course, I was preparing for the Olympics in a way that I peak at a certain point. At All-England, I felt I was getting back into the groove as well," she says. "But I am not affected by the postponement. We anyway have tournaments continuously."

Badminton is different from a few other Olympic sports, like boxing, wrestling or even hockey, in the sense that it has a very active calendar and the shuttlers compete in a high-level tournament virtually every second week.

That, Sindhu says, will help them in realigning with the new Olympics dates seamlessly. "For us, we have tournaments continuously and in every tournament, we need to

**For us, we have tournaments continuously and in every tournament, we need to work hard. It's not like we work hard just for some tournaments and take a few others easy. So it's not a question of reset for me, but it's a daily process."**

**PV SINDHU**

work hard. It's not like we work hard just for some tournaments and take a few others easy. So it's not a question of reset for me, but it's a daily process," she says.

Given that the sporting calendar looks disrupted for the foreseeable future, no one knows when the 'process' will begin again. "If they are postponing events, there is some serious issue. We need to understand and accept that," she says. "We are all on a pause right now."

Until play begins, there might be more late mornings and binge-watching evenings for the shuttle star.

**BRIEFLY**

**ECB planning to install coronavirus checkpoints**

London: The England and Wales Cricket Board is planning to install coronavirus checkpoints and isolation units at grounds in its bid to resume international cricket without any spectator. The ECB had suspended all professional cricket till May 28, delaying the start of the new season, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed nearly 22,000 people globally.

However, ECB director of events Steve Elworthy said they are looking at ways to resume play inside closed doors and that it would need a sterile "bubble" to ensure the identification of anyone in the vicinity who was carrying the virus. "We're mapping out what international matches would look like behind closed doors," Elworthy said.

The UK government had banned mass gathering of more than 500 prior to current under lockdown to contain the virus. Alluding to the initial government advice, Elworthy said: "The advice around mass gatherings was 500 people or fewer."

**I still have a lot left in my career: Anderson**



England bowler James Anderson is determined that the coronavirus will not end his illustrious career as he focuses on keeping fit by taking part

in "virtual" training sessions with his teammates. Anderson, 37, whose 584 Test wickets are the most taken by any pacesman in the history of the game, is nearing the end of his playing days.

But the Lancashire veteran says despite having no cricket to play until the end of May at the earliest, the idea of not bowling professionally again has not crossed his mind. "I've not actually thought about never playing cricket again," he said during a conference call on Thursday. "I feel like we will play again and I will play again at some stage. I'm still hungry to play, I've still got ambitions to play for England. So I think the fact I've been able to do this for a long time and I get to play a sport as a job means when I do get to do that again, I'm really going to cherish it."

**LOST SEASON**

## The sudden change of tide that left Page's dreams high and dry

**SHIVANI NAIK**  
MUMBAI, MARCH 27

INDIA'S LONG-DISTANCE swimmer and record holder over the 800m freestyle and 400m Individual Medley, Advait Page, was prepared for the extra turns involved when training at the best collegiate facility in the United States: NCAA teams typically train and race over 25 yards (22.86 metres), not the Olympian 50 metres. What he never anticipated at the start of his term at University of Florida (UF)—arguably boasting the swimming superpower's best college program in the pool—was the Covid-19 outbreak twist that has brought the world to a standstill.

The 18-year-old landed back home in Indore last week just as the American outbreak was set to rise, cutting short his freshman's year taking the first direct flight out of Newark to Mumbai, avoiding any European layover. But the curtailed eight months spent alongside talents like Kieran Smith (500 Yard Freestyle American Record in Feb 2020) and Robert Finke (1650 Yard Freestyle American Record in Feb 2020) who were favourites for selection in the US Swim Team when trials would be held and were expected to set Tokyo on fire later in the sum-



Long-distance swimmer Advait Page spent eight months alongside some of the finest talents in his field.

mer, gave Page enough of a whiff of what top-class excellence looks and trains like in the pool.

He also has as teammates Trey Freeman,

another top distance swimmer and Grant Sanders as well as Jordanian Khader Baqlah -200 m Freestyle swimmer who may represent his country on the same college program - alongside him in the pool, gym etc.

And then came the first ripples of disruption a month ago when they started getting educated about the dangers of the Coronavirus as training wound up and then heard that the national championship would be cancelled.

"It was difficult and I had to come back because you could not enter the water to train. I'm worried about this enforced break and concerned that these gains of the last 8 months might be lost. But going through this crisis will bond us stronger together," Advait says as he stays at home through the lockdown like the rest of the world.

Just last August, the challenges of reaching Olympic standards on NCAA's best swim campus had seemed entirely routine: getting used to 'short course' swimming rather than the long course of 50m length laps. Collegiate swimming in his pet event, the 1500m, runs over 1650 yards (1508.76 metres) in the 25 yard pool - which translates to 66 laps and 65 turns. Internationally and over the long course, it's 29 turns. "So you basically run into walls every 25 yards. I

was aware my turns are not strong and now I had to do double the laps. I had to adjust to these speedbreakers and not having the fastest pace," he recalls of the conundrum over the first few months.

Youngest among even the 10 freshmen at Florida, Advait was aiming high every single day while being tested to go beyond being the biggest fish in the small Indian pond.

"Even making the national championship Division 1 is tough and all other 40 swimmers from your college are close to you in times so it's a constant push. The first challenge is to make own College team," he says of being on the South East Conference team. There are racing opportunities every month at local college and YMCA meets. But the summer nationals are the prime event. "Usually the top swimmers go into a competition tapered (reducing training intensity in days just before the competition), shaved and wearing their best suits only twice a year. Otherwise, we compete untapered, unshaven and in training costumes. It helped me get used to how to devise racing strategies," Advait says.

The Indore lad would learn about pre-season and the very gruelling mid-season where they put in the hard yards and coming to terms with incremental improvements.

"Obviously I'd thought my timings would improve dramatically. But that's not how training works - it's geared to peak at the end of the season. So I trained patiently through Christmas and spring and saw the results," he says.

His downtime is spent with tutors specially assigned to help college athletes catch up with their course. "Our swimming coach insists that we maintain a good grade point average. He values respect, honesty and good grades," says the sports management Year 1 student.

**Swimming with the cream**

His coach at University of Florida is 1988 Seoul gold medalist Anthony Nesty, and Advait has some world-class names - all elite swimmers and alumni who train in the same pool but with a different set of coaches.

These include swim royalty Caleb Dressel, winner of 7 gold medals at 2017 and 2019 World Championships, multiple gold medalist Ryan Lochte - a veteran of 4 Olympics and closest rival of Phelps in 400 & 200 IM, again a strong contender for US team for Olympics as well as Big names True Sweetster and Mitch D'Arrigo.

"Sometimes they come to train in the same slot. Also when we traveled in

# A Champions League match may have triggered the Covid-19 outbreak

REPORTS SUGGEST that a Round of 16 game at the San Siro is where the coronavirus multiplied and spread in Italy and Spain as fans thronged the San Siro, making the two countries Europe's Covid-19 hotspot.

## THE EVENT

On February 19, more than 40,000 Bergamo residents – a city north-east of Milan – went to San Siro to watch their home team Atalanta play a Champions League round of 16 fixture against Spain's Valencia. Atalanta's 4-1 first-leg victory triggered wild celebrations inside the stadium as also outside, in Milan and Bergamo. Fans hugged each other in a packed stadium.

## THE CONSEQUENCE

A few weeks later, Bergamo became the hardest-hit town in Italy's hardest-hit region, Lombardy. Two days ago, the number of coronavirus cases in Lombardy jumped

by 2,500. As *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported: "The spread of the novel coronavirus has swelled the daily obituary section in Bergamo's local newspaper from two or three pages to as much as 10 or 11. Intensive care units there don't have nearly enough beds, and Italian soldiers are being deployed to move coffins from Bergamo's overwhelmed morgues."

Bergamo's mayor Giorgio Gori later admitted that the football match did a serious damage. "It's clear that evening was a situation in which the virus was widely spread," he told *AFP*, while *AP* quoted him as saying: "Unfortunately, we couldn't have known. No one knew the virus was already here."

## TRANSMITTING IT TO SPAIN

It could well be a case that a few thousands away fans who were present at San Siro that day unknowingly got in touch with several coronavirus carriers. So when they returned to Spain, they took the



The first leg of Atalanta's Champions League clash with Valencia was played in front of a packed house at the San Siro. AP

novel virus with them. The return-leg fixture between Valencia and Atalanta was played behind closed doors at Mestalla Stadium on March 10. But by then, the

damage was done. According to reports, six days after the return-leg match, Valencia announced that 35 per cent of their starters tested positive for coron-

avirus. Atalanta's goalkeeper Marco Sportiello became the club's first player to contact coronavirus. So far, Spain has recorded more than 64,000 positive coronavirus cases and over 4,500 deaths.

## ITALY'S CORONAVIRUS TIMELINE

Italy's coronavirus timeline shows how positive cases have risen exponentially after the football match. On January 31, the Italian government suspended flights to China after two positive coronavirus cases in Rome. On February 20, a day after the Champions League match, a man was tested positive in Lombardy. He had been to the hospital previously but left without a test. It is believed that he spread the virus widely before developing severe symptoms.

On February 23, some towns in Lombardy were placed under quarantine. Some football matches were cancelled. On March 4, the number of positive cases rose to 3,089. A week later, the number in-

creased to 12,462. On March 22, when almost the whole of Italy went into a total lockdown, the number of Covid-19 cases had jumped to 59,138.

## THE NEGLIGENCE

On the face of it, Italy initially looked at the threat as a problem exported from China and assumed that cancellation of flights to and from China would solve the problem. They allowed football matches, carnivals and fanfare to continue till the first week of March. Only on March 9, the authorities suspended Serie A and B following a government decree from Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte.

"Italy looked at the example of China, not as a practical warning, but as a science fiction movie that had nothing to do with us. And when the virus exploded, Europe looked at us the same way we looked at China," Sandra Zampa, undersecretary of Italy's Health Ministry was quoted as saying by *The New York Times*. **ENS**

# FIFA's bailout plan

Football's global governing body works towards providing a new framework to help clubs survive shutdown

TARIQ PANJA  
MARCH 27

WITH FOOTBALL'S global calendar upended by the coronavirus, FIFA is scrambling to draft new regulations for player contracts and transactions between clubs in an effort to create a road map out of the sport's unprecedented shutdown. Lawyers at FIFA's Zurich headquarters have huddled (virtually) with representatives from leagues, clubs and players unions to provide a framework to deal with the cascading issues created by the pandemic.

With leagues across the world idle – many nearing the end of their seasons – and thousands of athletes at home, unable to practice, clubs are increasingly concerned about their financial futures.

Many of them have implemented patchwork measures on their own to try to mitigate the effects of the stoppage. Now FIFA is trying to come up with a plan to deal with the aftermath of the frozen seasons and the eventual restart of football and all the business that goes along with it. Estimates for the costs of the shutdown vary widely, but industry leaders are bracing for an enormous impact. Andrea Agnelli, the head of Europe's trade body for clubs, told his members they were facing "the biggest challenge the game and our industry has ever faced."

In a confidential document, a copy of which was reviewed by *The New York Times*, named "Covid-19: Football Regulatory issues," a special working group from FIFA has laid out the most pressing issues. Its main focus is on player contracts and transfer windows – periods when clubs can buy and sell players. There are typically two windows, one in the middle of the season and the other in post-season. But with no certainty as to when the current seasons will end, FIFA has proposed that clubs extend the contracts of players whose agreements were to expire this summer until the seasons can be finished. It also suggested that players who were to join new clubs as free agents continue with their current clubs until the end of the seasons.

The proposals, which are an attempt to balance the needs of the clubs and of the players, also address a glaring issue: how to compensate club employees when the means of income for many teams, particularly smaller ones that derive more revenue from stadium receipts than from broadcast contracts, have diminished – almost completely, in some cases. "It is clear that the Covid-19 virus outbreak has frustrated football employment agreements on a global basis," FIFA's document said. "The obligations placed on both parties are made impossible – players and coaches are unable to work; clubs are unable to provide work, nor are they in a position to compensate employees for work not provided."

Without any central guidance yet, clubs have come up with a wide range of solutions for themselves. Some have already struck amicable agreements with their players to reduce salary payments.

At Leeds United, a second-tier English club that was poised to clinch promotion to the Premier League when play was suspended, players agreed to a salary deferral for an indefinite period so other employees at the club could continue to be paid.

In France's top division, Lyon and Marseille used French law to put their players into a form of technical unemployment, in order for the state to contribute part of their salaries. Some of the biggest clubs are also feeling the pinch. Barcelona announced on Thursday that it was temporarily cutting salaries club-wide, including those of players and staff, but did not provide specific figures.

In some cases, relations between clubs and players have soured. In Switzerland, F.C. Sion fired nine players after they refused a pay cut; the players' union in Colombia on Wednesday issued a furious comment after Independiente Santa Fe posted a Twitter poll asking its fans to vote on whether or not the team's players should have their salaries reduced.

In some countries, including Croatia, Cyprus, Israel and Malta, clubs unilaterally made pay cuts within the first days of the shutdown. With such variances, FIFA has tried to provide a framework for the negotiations, start-



FIFA's most direct initiative is a suggestion that it could dip into its own cash reserves to help pay salaries to players suddenly left without an income. Reuters

## THE FIFA FILES

A FIFA document titled "Covid-19: Football Regulatory issues," has underlined some of the game's most pressing issues. They are:

**TRANSFER WINDOW:** With the uncertainty prevailing over when the current seasons will end, FIFA has proposed that clubs extend the contracts of players and suggested those who were to join new clubs as free agents continue with their current clubs till the end of the season.

**COMPENSATION TO CLUBS:** FIFA is looking to work out a formula to compensate clubs, particularly the smaller ones that derive bulk of their revenues from stadium receipts rather than broadcast contracts, both of which have diminished completely because of the current pandemic.

**It is clear that the Covid-19 outbreak has frustrated football employment agreements on a global basis... the obligations placed on both parties are made impossible – players and coaches are unable to work; clubs are unable to provide work, nor are they in a position to compensate employees for work not provided."**

THE FIFA DOCUMENT

ing with a recommendation that clubs and their players come to an agreement to defer or reduce salary while no football is being played. FIFA also proposed that clubs look at the option of furloughing players, "provided adequate alternative income support arrangements can be found for employees during the period in

question." This could be the case in countries like Britain, where the government has agreed to pay up to 80 per cent of an employee's salary if the employer is unable to operate.

FIFA's most direct initiative, though, is a suggestion that it could dip into its own cash reserves to help pay salaries for players suddenly left without an income. FIFA has also anticipated the chaos the current suspension will wreak on the annual \$7 billion player trading window. Discussions that sometimes take months have been squeezed into days, as an urgent plan to change the contours of the global transfer windows has quickly come together.

## Pressing concerns

Perhaps the most pressing concern for FIFA is Europe's summer trading window, which had been set to open in some of Europe's biggest leagues as early as May. That is now impossible, given that the current season cannot be completed by then.

FIFA said it would not put a deadline on any league to finish the current season and would also approve any requests to change the dates of the transfer window. Teams could carry out transactions for as long as 16 weeks, FIFA said, four weeks longer than the previous maximum for a window. A working group led by Victor Montagliani, a FIFA vice president, discussed the matters Thursday, though no final decisions were made.

The head-spinning nature of events brought on by the novel coronavirus has led to a rare period of collaboration among soccer's biggest leagues, clubs and governing bodies to find a solution. That was made clear in a letter sent to members of the European Club Association, an umbrella group for around 200 top-division teams.

It was written by Agnelli, the organization's chairman who is also president of the Italian club Juventus. Agnelli described the current standstill as "a real existential threat." He laid out two key objectives for his group: First was defining strategies to get players back on the field safely. That emphasis suggested a desire to play games without spectators at first, probably for a lengthy period. The group's second focus, Agnelli said, was coordinating efforts to "help manage club financials in this time of social and economic crisis." **NYT**

# Virus fallout: Salary cuts and pink slips on the cards

## BARCELONA TO TRIM SALARIES

Barcelona said they were slashing salaries to counter the financial fall-out from the coronavirus although the Spanish giants did not specify if all of its employees would be affected by the move. All football has been suspended in Spain where the virus has so far killed more than 4,000 people with 56,000 confirmed cases. "The suspension of competitions, following the epidemic of Covid-19, entails the cessation of all activities, sporting and non-sporting, of our club," said a statement released by Barcelona. The club, it added, had taken a "series of measures to mitigate its effects and reduce the economic consequences of this crisis." "Essentially, it is a reduction in the working day, forced by the circumstances, and consequently a proportional reduction in the remuneration provided for in the respective contracts." They did not specify the scale of the cuts.

## ESPANYOL REQUEST 70% PAY CUT

Espanyol have asked labour authorities in Catalonia to allow them to cut player and staff salaries by 70 per cent while football is suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic, the La Liga club said Friday. The Barcelona-based outfit, who are bottom of La Liga, are among a raft of clubs set to take a huge financial hit due to the suspension of football in Spain, one of the countries worst hit by COVID-19. "Due to the temporary suspension of the season, Espanyol have presented a plan of partial unemployment," the club said. "The requested measure consists of a 70 per cent reduction in working hours." Espanyol said that the proposed reduction regards players and coaching staff from the men's and women's first teams, Espanyol B and youth teams, and was made "unilaterally

for reasons of urgency".

## LAYOFFS BY AUSTRALIA FEDERATION

Australia's soccer federation laid off most of its staff on Friday as domestic sports battled to stay afloat during the national lockdown to contain the spread of the coronavirus. A round of layoffs also hit domestic cricket while the National Rugby League, scrapped a slew of national and state tournaments. Football Federation Australia (FFA), three days after suspending the top-flight A-League indefinitely, said it had let go 70% of its staff in a bid to keep the embattled code afloat. "This has been an extremely difficult decision to make, but necessary to stabilise the organisation so that it can continue to service the game, albeit in a vastly different landscape," FFA Chief Executive James Johnson said.

## UNITED TO OFFER REFUNDS

Manchester United will refund supporters if they have to play their remaining home games of the season behind closed doors or if they are scrapped due to the coronavirus pandemic. The deadline for season ticket renewals for next season has also been suspended, with no indication as to when the current campaign can restart. English football has been suspended until April 30, but a meeting of Premier League clubs next week is expected to push that date further back. United would be one of the clubs worst affected should the 2019/20 season fail to be completed as they sit fifth in the Premier League, outside the Champions League places, and are still involved in the latter stages of the Europa League and FA Cup. "The club supports the collective intent to complete the Premier League, FA Cup and the UEFA club competitions," United said.

COMPILED FROM AGENCIES

# Athletes qualified for Tokyo 2020 will keep spots for 2021

AFP/REUTERS  
PARIS, MARCH 27

ATHLETES WHO had already qualified for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics before they were postponed will keep their places when the showpiece takes place in 2021, sources told the AFP.

Around 57 per cent of the 11,000 scheduled participants for Tokyo had already made sure of taking part when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) pushed the Games back to 2021 due to the coronavirus on Tuesday. The IOC and 32 international sports federations held a teleconference on Thursday where it was decided to respect the qualification process.

"Thomas Bach (the IOC President) first explained the reasons for the postponement of the Games, then said that the athletes qualified for Tokyo 2020 would automatically be qualified for 2021," one of the participants in the conference told AFP.

"One of the main subjects was to know when and how to organise the qualifications. "In some federations, many sportsmen and sportswomen are not qualified and it takes at least three months for the Olympic Games to organise them." The 2020 Tokyo Games were scheduled for July 24-August 9, but after telephone discussions between Bach and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, a historic joint decision was taken for the first postponement of an Olympics in peacetime.

However, there is no definite date yet for the rescheduled Games with Bach saying Tuesday the Tokyo Olympics "must be rescheduled to a date beyond 2020 but not later than summer 2021, to safeguard the health of the athletes, everybody involved in the Olympic Games and the international community". Many Olympic sports, such as boxing, saw the vast majority of their qualifying tournaments either interrupted or cancelled due to the global health situation.

Others, such as sailing however, already had 90 per cent of their competitors qualified. "The allocated quotas remain allocated," confirmed another participant in Thursday's meeting.

"Thomas Bach has confirmed that a decision (on a new date for the 2021 event) will be made within the next four weeks," he said. "Some said they prefer May 2021, others June." Some federation chiefs also expressed financial concerns, claiming in advance part of the sums traditionally allocated after the Olympic Games by the IOC to the governing bodies.

## 'Canada's withdrawal unilateral'

Canada's decision to withdraw from the Tokyo Olympic Games if they were to be held in 2020 was a unilateral decision based on the health and safety of athletes and with no consultation with the International Olympic Committee, the COC said on Friday.

The Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee had said on Sunday they would not be sending athletes to Tokyo in July if the IOC decided to go ahead with the plans to stage Games this year amid the coronavirus outbreak.

"While we are, and have been, in constant communication with the IOC, our decision last Sunday evening to not send athletes to Tokyo this summer because of COVID-19 concerns was taken solely by the Canadian Olympic Committee without the participation of the IOC," COC spokesperson Photi Sotiropoulos told Reuters in a telephone call.

"The decision was taken in consultation with our athletes' commission, our Chief Medical Officer and the Canadian sport community... "We met with our athletes' commission... twice before making our decision with the full support of over 100 members of our sport community and the Canadian Olympic Board," Sotiropoulos added.