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THE DELHI EXODUS: WHAT WE FAILED TO LEARN FROM 1889 AND 1900

The nationwide lockdown announced by the Prime Minister on March 24 suffers from the same vices that haunted its predecessors in 1889 and 1900.

CORONAVIRUS

SELECTIVE TESTING AND LOCKDOWN

Why these moves are more suitable for India than 'test, test, test'.

VIDEO OF THE DAY



BEST MOBILE GAMES TO PLAY

Here is a list of mobile games you can play while stuck at home

EXPRESS AUDIO

How a 93-year-old man recovered from corona

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

Today on the 3 things podcast, we talk about the story of an elderly couple from Kerala that recovered after being infected by the coronavirus

FROM PAGE ONE

PPE, senior citizens savings

existing 6.9 per cent, down 1.4 per cent, according to a notification by the finance ministry. As against these small savings instruments, interest rate for subscribers of Employees' Provident Fund Organisation has been recommended to be at a higher level of 8.5 per cent for 2019-20. Banks have often cited the high small-savings rates as an impediment to effective rate cut transmission since these prevent them from lowering their own deposit rates. Most public sector banks have passed on the RBI's recent 75 basis points rate cut.

Kejriwal warns of surge

Mehta said, adding that if these migrants reach their villages, "there is extreme and most likely possibility of their carrying" the infection to rural India "which has remained untouched so far". He told the court "as on 11 am, there is no person walking on the roads in an attempt to reach his/her hometown/village". The court expressed satisfaction with the measures taken by the government to check the spread of COVID-19 "at this stage". It asked police and other authorities to understand the anxiety and fear of the migrants and deal with them in a humane manner.

SC: Report the official version

In fact, some have lost their lives in the process. It is therefore not possible for us to overlook this menace of fake news either by electronic, print or social media," the bench said. It asked the Centre to make active within 24 hours "a daily bulletin... through all media avenues including social media and forums to clear the doubts of people as submitted by the Solicitor General of India". The reference was to Solicitor General Tushar Mehta's submission that the government, in order to deal with fake news on the COVID-19 situation, was in the process of setting up a separate unit headed by a "Joint Secretary level officer in the Ministry of Health and consisting of eminent specialist doctors from recognised institutions like AIIMS etc to answer every query of citizens and to provide real time and true facts" to people. Mehta said the modalities will be worked out immediately and the government will publicise details of the portal that can be approached for "genuine information". Incidentally, similar assertions were made in a status report filed before the bench by Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla. This was in response to two petitions being heard by the bench. The petitions by advocates Alakh Alok Srivastava and Richa Bansal sought directions to ensure the welfare of the migrant labourers who have been walking to their homes in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar from their workplaces in states like Delhi. The Supreme Court said Section 54 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 provides for punishment to a person who makes or circulates a false alarm or warning as to disaster or its severity or magnitude, leading to panic and that such person shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to one year or with fine. The bench also quoted WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, saying "we are not just fighting an epidemic; we are fighting an infodemic. Fake news spreads faster and more easily than this virus, and is just as dangerous". Appearing for the Centre, Mehta referred to the financial package announced by the government for the welfare of the poor and said there was "no need" for such mass movement of workers since the package had taken care of their concerns. He attributed the development to panic created by fake news and social media messages and sought directions to check this. The migration "defeats the very object of the preventive measures" and "put their lives and lives of others in danger",

Day 7: Alarm bells ring in 20 states

the meeting," Minister Perni Venkataramiah said. In Tamil Nadu, officials said 1,031 people attended the congregation, but are yet to trace 300. "All of them have returned, but many phones are switched off and others could not be traced at their addresses. About 400 people are still stranded in Delhi," said K Shanmugam, state chief secretary. "We have to quarantine them, screen all their contacts. We will do it in two or three days," he said. Karnataka has placed 78 persons, including 50 foreign nationals, in quarantine, after authorities discovered that the 60-year-old man who died in Tumkur on March 27 was also infected at the Markaz. "We are not sure if all 78 quarantined persons participated in the congregation in Delhi but they are all from the Tablighi Jamaat," he said. The police claimed that as many as 300 people linked to the Jamaat from Karnataka participated in the event between March 8 and March 11 — and efforts were on to put everyone in quarantine. In Kerala, officials said about 59 persons had attended the programme in Delhi, and the process of identification was still on. Closer to Delhi, the Uttar Pradesh government said 157 persons from 19 districts attended the congregation, six of whom have tested positive for Coronavirus. On Tuesday, a police team checked the residence of all 157 persons to find that just nine had returned so far. After a medical examination, they were quarantined. In Bihar, the police booked five members of a mosque for allegedly sheltering eight Indonesian nationals who had participated in the congregation. Before coming to Bihar, they had travelled to Odisha from Delhi. Their travel details in Odisha are being acquired to trace the chain of contacts. While both Assam and Uttarakhnd said they had records of the persons who attended the programme in

ICMR compares: infection probability low

when a mask should be worn. If you are not feeling well and want to go to a hospital, you should definitely wear a mask. Our primary focus is on social distancing. There are reports of homemade masks, we are examining the matter," said Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Health Ministry, emphasising that masks are a "scarce" commodity. Till last week, hospitals across the country had a total stock of 11.95 lakh N95 masks. An additional 5 lakh masks were distributed in the last two days, and another 1.40 lakh on Tuesday. Another 10 lakh masks will be part of the PPE kits being sourced from Singapore. The N95 masks are currently being supplied by two domestic manufacturers with a combined capacity to produce 50,000 masks per day. Efforts are on to increase daily production to 1 lakh by next week. The DRDO is also collaborating with local manufacturers to produce about 20,000 N99 masks per day within a week. Even as the entire containment strategy now focuses on identifying hotspots and putting them under surveillance with increased testing, Agarwal said: "From the government's perspective, even a single case is a hotspot... you have to understand that it is a very dynamic situation, what is a hotspot today will not remain one if containment is done.

Three trains on Railways radar

Similarly, a success story today can turn into a hotspot tomorrow." While 42,788 samples have been tested so far, including 4,346 in the last 24 hours, the 47 private laboratory chains which have been approved have together tested about 1,800 samples. Sources said some of them have written to the government, saying that they are hobbled by the lack of testing kits. Meanwhile, a four-year project, with \$1 billion from the World Bank's COVID-19 Fast-Track Facility, called the India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness has been launched. "Proper implementation of guidelines would ensure seamless movement of raw materials and finished goods. There is a similar issue being faced at ports which is hurting smooth movement of imported raw materials and exporting of finished products," Khan said. Nestle India said that manufacturing and distribution at the company's factories and warehouses had been either scaled down or suspended. At the wholesale level, companies such as Metro Cash & Carry have seen attendance levels fall to 50 per cent over the last few days and plummeting footfall by retail customers. "We have a stock of all essential food items - rice, dal, atta, and our stores for next two weeks," said Arvind Mediratta, MD & CEO of Metro Cash & Carry India. "We will eventually witness shortage in pulses and whole spices as these items are largely transported from states like Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh which were restricting movement of goods." Also hard hit has been the pharmaceutical sector. "We're seeing a shortage of some Vitamin C and multivitamin brands on the medicine side. On top of this, the supply of brands like Whisper, Dettol and Savlon, Nanpro, Cerelac and even Dove shampoo in our store is all we have left, because we're not getting any more stocks of these products," said D K Chaudhary, pharmacy manager of Delhi-based Globe Medicos. The situation is dire in smaller towns where supplies take longer to reach. In western UP and Bihar, where the district

Stores wait for trucks, labour

administration has identified and nominated shops to continue supply of essential items such as pulses, rice and wheat, there has been no supply for the past one week, several shoppers told *The Indian Express*. On the ground, the trucks wait for relief. Kultaran Singh Atwal, president of All India Motor Transport Congress, said that many truck drivers have fled to their homes fearful of contracting the disease and of the hold-up at the border. "Outside every state checkpoint, hundreds of trucks are stuck," he said. production is projected to take a hit due to shortage of labour and raw materials. Besides labour, the other key break in the supply chain has been the transport lifeline - thousands of trucks stuck in jams at semi-sealed border entry points. Result: raw materials, too, are in short supply. "Shortly after the partial lockdown was announced, everything came to a complete stop. There was no raw material available even for basic items as biscuits and other eatables. We had some raw input stock for disinfectants, handwash and hand sanitiser but we ran out soon as we ramped up production," said a senior executive at Hindustan Unilever. The largest FMCG player in the nation is unlikely to restart production or supply of its non-essential items anytime soon. Over 75 per cent of dal mills are inoperative due to unavailability of labour and supply of raw material. Companies like Dabur India and Nestle are facing shutdowns and labour issues. "We are deploying special buses to help our workers and staff reach manufacturing units for producing essential products. However, availability of raw material and packing material continues to be a challenge with the restricted movement of trucks and this is hampering quick start-up of production," Shahrukh Khan, Executive Director-Operations at Dabur India, told *The Indian Express*. FMCG companies also flagged the lack of communication between the Centre, states and the local administration as another factor delaying normalisation.

At Rajasthan border, last check

shortages in every war)... At least, there is a doctor here," he shrugs. Across Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan, doctors have been besieged by the numbers. But at entry points to UP - Mathura from Bharatpur, Noida from Delhi, and Agra from Dholpur - there were no doctors Sunday, just one police jeep. Singh is also battling another - time and sleep. He is posted at the Karah Community Health Centre, with two colleagues. But now, from 8 am to 8 pm, two of them sit at the border. By night, it is left to one. Even through the day, there is work to do. The CHC itself may be shut, but Singh does his bit to spread awareness "every morning". "I tell people to wash their hands, and not to mingle. So far, there are no cases in Bharatpur, but if it spreads to the villages, God knows what will happen...," he says. Yogendra Singh, the local patwari who is giving the doctor company, completes the sentence: "There are three doctors. The CHC covers 15 villages, all with populations of over a thousand each. Sochke dekhaye (Think about it)." At the District Hospital in Bharatpur, 15 km away, there is a queue of people, spread reasonably apart "for social distancing". Outside, there is anger and confusion. "They brought me from the border and took my name down. Can I go home now?" one asks. Another complains: "No tests are taking place." A third says: "They put a stamp my hand and told me to stay at home. But how will I get home now, my village is 50 km away?" At one end of the queue are two doctors behind a table, and a cloth screen. The questions are the same. "Depending on what they say, we recommend isolation, or institutional quarantine, or home quarantine. The government has set up quarantine stations in hotels across the city," says the lead doctor, who does not want to be identified. Over one hour, from 6 pm to 7 pm, as the light begins to fade outside, the doctors never stop, and the people too, most of them returning migrants. Inside the room, there are six doctors. Only two have full body protection, transparent and flimsy. Not one patient undergoes a temperature check in that hour. Four other doctors wear only gloves, a mask, and a white jacket. "Like the government, we are doing the best we can," the doctor says. Outside the section closed off for possible COVID-19 cases, a building stands alone in an open field. The paint on the walls is coming off, and the cement ceiling is chipped. The blue poster in front reads: "Isolation Centre." The building is in the eyeline of Mahendra Rathore, standing in queue. "Looking at that building, I have half a mind to run away. What if I have the virus? They say they give food and water and a place to sleep. *Lekin woh toh jail mein bhi dete hai* (But that they give in jail, too!)"

4 THE OUTBREAK THE CITY

FOR MANY, HOME IS WHERE FAMILY IS



SUNIL KUMAR, 32
Family members: 3
Profession: Tailor in Bhajanpura
Earning: Rs 10,000 per month; Headed towards: Etawah
WHY HE LEFT: "I had to stop working after the lockdown was imposed... it has been very difficult... If they extend the lockdown, I can't be stuck at the shelter."



RAMESH KUMAR, 40
Family members: 3
Profession: Catering staff
Earning: Rs 600 a month; Headed towards: Jaipur
WHY HE LEFT: "I tried to return home but police stopped me due to the lockdown. Though this shelter has been my home for the past one year, I need to get back to my family in Jaipur."



SURENDER CHAUDHARY, 48
Family members: 5
Profession: Works at a local hotel
Earning: Rs 450 a day; Headed towards: Gorakhpur
WHY HE LEFT: "I used to stay at Lahori Gate, near Khari Baoli. I don't even have a phone with me to speak to my family."

REPORTING BY ANAND MOHAN J, PHOTOS BY ABHINAV SAHA

Gurgaon sees no new cases in 7 days, says testing enough

SAKSHI DAYAL
GURGAON, MARCH 31

EVEN AS the number of COVID-19 cases saw a spike in Delhi and Noida, no new cases have been recorded in Gurgaon in the past week. According to officials, this is not due to a lack of testing. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Jaswant Singh Punia said it is, in fact, the result of a lack of "community transmission". "All the people who have tested positive in Gurgaon so far have either had a travel history or have been in contact with people who have a travel history and had tested positive. The fact that there have been no new cases in the last week indicates there is no community transmission here as of now," said Dr Punia. Dismissing allegations of "under testing", he said, "The samples sent are of a good volume, but fortunately most of them are not positive." A total of 10 people have tested positive in Gurgaon so far. Six have recovered and been discharged from hospital. The district has a population of over 15 lakh, and 448 samples have been sent for testing so far, according to data released by the

Gurgaon health department Tuesday. Of these, 384 people have tested negative and results of 54 samples are awaited. The number of samples sent for testing daily varies. While 30 samples were received for testing on March 25, the figure was 24 the following day, and 30 on March 27. On March 28 and 29, the number of samples received was 26 and 23, and on Monday it was 29. Tuesday saw almost double the number of samples being received, at 54. "The number of samples received today are higher because most of them are of people who were found living together in a house in Pataudi. Some of them have been moved to the quarantine facility at the Civil Hospital," said the CMO. In Faridabad, two new cases were recorded on Tuesday, taking the total cases to six. Among them is an employee of a fire safety firm in Noida, where 16 people have already contracted coronavirus. His wife had tested positive Monday. "The other patient resides in Faridabad but runs a shop in Delhi," said a spokesperson of the Faridabad district administration.

269 city schools double up as relief centres for migrant workers stopped at the border

SUKRITA BARUAH
NEW DELHI, MARCH 31

LACCHMI (26) is four months into her pregnancy. On Sunday, she walked over 30 km with her husband and two children, aged two and four, from Nangloi — after their landlord locked them out of their rented home — to Anand Vihar in the hopes of catching a bus to their village in Etah. They were unsuccessful, but found cover in a school turned into a shelter in Patparganj. The shelter has been readied for migrant workers in Delhi who have found themselves without a place to stay because of the lockdown. Lacchmi, though, is restless. "My stomach has been hurting. I haven't met any female caretaker here so I haven't told anyone about my pregnancy. Yesterday, after all the walking,



At the school in Ghazipur. Mattresses have been laid out in 16 classrooms. Prem Nath Pandey

we found buses were not taking us across the border. I fainted out of exhaustion, and someone told my husband and children about this shelter. He brought me here," she said. Both the schools-turned-

shelters at Patparganj and Ghazipur, near the Uttar Pradesh border, are largely occupied by people who had reached the Anand Vihar Interstate Bus Terminal on Sunday, expecting a ride home.

On Sunday night, 150 people slept at the Patparganj centre, while 243 slept at Ghazipur. At both shelters, 9-12 mattresses have been laid out on the floors of each classroom, with some distance between them, and food is being provided by mid-day meal suppliers. Occupants are also not allowed to exit the school buildings. Families are sharing rooms with each other, but have been asked not to sit on each other's mattresses. Jeetender (37) said he is impatient to get home to Kheri, Uttar Pradesh. "People here walked till Anand Vihar because they heard news that buses were taking people to villages in UP. I walked from Subhash Nagar, but all of us ended up running around in circles. A bus took some of us from Anand Vihar to Ghazipur bus stand. We got hit by lathis at different points. Finally, some people told me

about this (shelter), so I'm here. I have received food here, but the moment the border is opened, I need to get back to my wife and four children," he said. The Ghazipur shelter has mattresses stocked in empty classrooms, in preparation for new occupants. "We have around 40 classrooms but are using only 16 as of now. We are arranging for electricity points so that they don't have to leave the rooms to charge their phones. We will also provide kits comprising bathing soap, detergent, toothbrush and toothpaste," said a member of the school administration. The government has published a list of 269 schools which are to function as hunger relief centres and be converted into shelters, and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has announced that arrangements have been made to feed 4 lakh people on a daily basis.



South, East MCDs call off house meetings

New Delhi: For the first time ever, the South and East Delhi MCDs could not hold their mandatory house meetings in March. Holding a house meeting is mandatory each month, in which all councillors participate. Else, the power of the deliberative wing is considered null and void and transferred to the executive wing. The North body had held its meet in the beginning of the month. Leader of the House in the South MCD, Kamaljeet Sehrawat, said a file has been moved to the L-G seeking permission to not dissolve the deliberative wing as it is an "emergency situation".

HC urged to look into gathering at Nizamuddin

New Delhi: The Delhi HC was urged to take suo motu action against officials concerned for allegedly failing to prevent a religious congregation in Nizamuddin, during the Delhi government lockdown, which led to the spread of COVID-19 in the country. Central government standing counsel Gaurang Kanth wrote to the court in his personal capacity. **ENS**

City sees cleanest March air in 5 years

SHIVAM PATEL
NEW DELHI, MARCH 31

DELHI'S AIR quality in March was the cleanest on record in the last five years. Experts said this was achieved through favourable meteorological conditions, including an all-time record high rainfall, unseen since the count began in 1901, along with the absence of major emission sources as a result of the coronavirus lockdown. "What we are seeing is extraordinary. This is the baseline of what Delhi's air quality should be after factoring in only limited emissions from very few sources," said an official from the Delhi environment department. Emissions over the past 10 days have reduced, the official said, due to restrictions imposed on movement of private vehicles, public transport, commercial flights and trains, and closure of all non-essential services. Data from the Central

Pollution Control Board (CPCB), analysed by *The Indian Express*, shows the average monthly air quality index (AQI) this March was 128, significantly lower than average AQIs of the same month since 2016 when records began. There were 10 'satisfactory' air quality days this March, where the AQI is between 51 and 100, and one 'good' air quality day, where the index ranges from 0 to 50 — an AQI of this measure was not achieved in this period since 2016, as per the CPCB data. In the previous four years in March, only 'moderate', 'poor' and 'very poor' air quality was seen in the capital. This year, the number of 'poor' air days, where the AQI is between 201 and 300, was only two, while the remaining days saw 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'moderate' air quality. Kuldeep Srivastava, head of IMD's regional forecasting centre in Delhi, said the total rainfall recorded in the city in March was 109.6mm — an all-time high



An aerial view of the capital. Amit Mehra

WEATHER, LOCKDOWN PLAYED A PART

AVG AQI FOR MARCH		IMPACT OF COVID-19 CONTROL MEASURES	
2020	128.22	NOx reduction	PM2.5 reduction
2019	184.16	63%	49%
2018	203		
2017	211		
2016*	237.85		

*Data of 27 days; Source: CPCB
Source: SAFAR

for the month since counting began in 1901. The record for the second highest rainfall in March is 97.4 mm in 2015. Six Western Disturbances that affected the city in March and brought on strong winds and rainfall. The average wind speed recorded was 15-20 kmph, said Srivastava, adding, "Due to rainfall, suspension of dust remained low and pollutants in the air kept being pushed out by the winds." Air quality kept improving after the 'Janata Curfew' on March 22. In the last week since March 25, it largely remained in the 'satisfactory' range and further improved to 'good' on Saturday. An assessment done by the Centre's System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), of the lockdown period between March 24 and 31, showed 63% reduction in nitrogen oxide (NOx) and 49% reduction in PM2.5 presence in Delhi's air — as compared to the same period in 2019 and 2018.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 31

AMIDA tussle between the Uttar Pradesh and Delhi governments on the exodus of migrants from the national capital, a purported message on the 'SDM Seelampur Group' has come to light, which states that "people who are roaming on the streets and wish to cross the border may be escorted to Shastrī Park", and from there "DTC buses will take them to Ghaziabad border". The message is attributed to the "Div Com and Home Secretary". This comes two days after two senior Delhi government officers were suspended and two others were issued showcause notices for "failing to maintain absolute integrity and devotion to duty" during the lockdown. A Delhi government official said they are "not aware of any such message", and maintained that "there was no decision by the Delhi government at any level" to escort people to the border. Additional Chief Secretary (Transport) Renu Sharma and Principal Secretary (Finance) Rajeev Verma were suspended Sunday, while disciplinary showcause notices were issued to Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Satyagopal and the Seelampur sub-divisional magistrate Ajay Arora. The Indian Express sent the purported message to Arora, the Seelampur SDM, but he did not comment on the issue. Sharma,

Verma and Satyagopal did not comment on the issue either. After the lockdown was announced, thousands of migrant workers have been trying to walk to their villages. The numbers had swelled Saturday, when thousands gathered at Anand Vihar and Lal Kuan in the hope of getting a bus to UP. The Uttar Pradesh government had claimed Delhi government deliberately dropped migrant labourers at the border with UP — a charge denied by Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, who called the allegations petty and ridiculous. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has repeatedly appealed to migrants to stay in the capital, assuring them that food and shelter will be taken care of. Delhi government officials said they had not taken any decision to facilitate the exodus. "The government is not aware of any such messages sent by any officer," said an official, who did not wish to be named. The officers were involved in relief operations started by the government, especially coordination between different district officials regarding setting up of shelters and distribution of food. A government official said both had been working hard to ensure help is given to migrant workers. "Perhaps there was a misunderstanding. The officers have been working hard and are quite senior. Since the matter of services does not fall under the elected government, we did not have a say in the matter," the official said.

AT KALINDI KUNJ CAMP

Living amid medical waste, these refugees don't fear virus, only hunger

ANAND MOHAN J
NEW DELHI, MARCH 31

"THE ONE who collects the maximum number of syringes wins the game," shouted 11-year-old Irshad as he ran around Sharan Vihar camp's Assamese quarters, carrying a plastic tray and filling it with discarded syringes. Two of his friends only managed to find some plastic bottle caps and parts of what used to be a drip feed, and gave up after a few minutes. "I won the game today. We collect the syringes and play with them later. We do this every day," said Irshad.

The Sharan Vihar campsite, located near Kalindi Kunj, houses several hundred Rohingya refugees in addition to migrants from Assam, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. Many at the camp work as medical waste collectors, going from hospital to hospital and bringing back waste to the campsite to segregate. The campsite, which *The Indian Express* visited Monday, was filled with rows and rows of medical waste — surgical masks, gloves and empty tablet packets, among other items — packed into sky blue bags. The shutdown in Delhi over the coronavirus pandemic has

not just taken away their only source of livelihood, but residents are also at risk because they can't dispose of the waste, which has been accumulating around their homes. Most who work as medical waste collectors mainly reside in the Assamese quarters. One of them, Anwar Islam (39), said the last time he went to a local hospital to collect medical waste was a month ago. He said he "pays an authorised medical waste contractor to collect his quota from the hospital". It takes him over five hours to collect the waste, which his wife, Ashada Begum (37), then segre-



The camp is home to Rohingya and migrants from Assam, UP. Many work as medical waste collectors. Abhinav Saha

gates for a whole day. A kilogram of plastic medical waste fetches them Rs 12. Surrounded by a mountain of medical waste, their house is hard to find: Discarded face masks, tunics, gowns and caps jut out from the blue bags while a box of discarded injections lie near the entrance. Cooking some rice and dal from the ration distributed a day ago, Begum said: "There has been no work in months. First, it was because of the Shaheen Bagh protest... now the lockdown. I don't fear the disease, I fear my five children starving." "We have borrowed Rs 2,000

from camp residents. I don't know how long we will survive," she added. Further away, a dirt road littered with broken ampoules and empty tablet strips snakes its way around a mountain of medical waste, where Zaiful (36) stays with her three children in a one-room house. Around 15 days ago, she segregated the medical waste and is now thinking of ways to sell it in Nangloi. "I know it is dangerous to work in these conditions. But we can't even dispose of the waste now as police are not letting us leave the camp," she said. Her next-door neighbour

Dilshad fumed when asked about coronavirus: "I have a mask that will help me. The garbage around my house does not scare me. The empty plate does." Dr Ashok Aggarwal from the Indian Society of Hospital Waste Management said hospital waste must be disposed of within 48 hours as the risk of infections from a wide range of diseases — from Hepatitis B to HIV — is high. "Private contractors are offered the contracts. The waste is disposed of in burial pits or incinerators after it is shredded," he said. When contacted, South MCD officials said they will examine the issue.

PM speaks to Macron; experts from India, France to share virus info

External Affairs said. According to the MEA, Macron "strongly agreed" with Modi's view that the COVID-19 crisis is a "turning point in modern history"...

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Department of Forest, Environment and Climate Change, Jharkhand, Ranchi Office of Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, CAMPAA, Jharkhand Van Bhawan, Doranda, Ranchi

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Table with 6 columns: Sr. No., Name of Department/Board/Corp./Auth., Name of Work/Notice/ Tender, Opening Date/ Closing Date (Time), Amount/EMD (Approx.) (In Rupees), Website of the Department

'Asked to quit' amid lockdown, Meghalaya worker kills self in Agra

stated he was discriminated against, and that he had "nowhere to go" in wake of the lockdown. Denying that the death had anything to do with the restaurant or his family, Singh said that the establishment — Shanti Food Restaurant — is run by his widowed daughter-in-law.

Govt advises farmers to delay wheat harvest

New Delhi: Amid the lockdown due the outbreak of COVID-19, the government has advised farmers to delay wheat harvesting till April 20 without incurring any significant loss.

ICAR-CENTRAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON GOATS MAKHDOOM, P.O. FARAH-281122, MATHURA U.P. Phone: 0565-2763380 Fax No. 0565-2763246

Government of India (Department of Personnel & Training) Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie No. T-30027/1/2020 dated 1-4-2020

NATIONAL FERTILIZERS LIMITED (A Govt. of India Undertaking) NANGAL UNIT, NAYA NANGAL - 140126 (PUNJAB) TENDER NOTICE

Table with 7 columns: Sr. No., Description, Estimated Cost, Cost of Tender, Last date & time of receipt of tenders, Last date & time of opening of tenders

MEXICAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

Distancing neighbours

Mexico and the United States shut their border, sort of



People crossing the US-Mexico border into El Paso earlier this month. Reuters

TIJUANA AND San Diego are rumbustious siblings. The San Ysidro border crossing, which links them, is the world's busiest. Some 5m people a month make the northward journey between the cities. But covid-19 has brought about an abrupt change in their relationship. On March 19th California's government ordered the state's 42m residents to stay home to slow the spread of the new coronavirus. The next day Donald Trump, the American president, announced that the United States-Mexico border would be closed to all but "essential" traffic.

San Diego immediately became a ghost town, its streets bare but for a few dog walkers and homeless people. At each stop on an empty tram, a gloved attendant wiped clean the buttons that operate its doors. Traffic at San Ysidro slowed to a trickle. But at Tijuana beach, a few hundred metres across the border, couples strolled, vendors sold hot dogs and party-goers congregated around fires. Despite the notable absence of Americans, the pandemic seemed far away. "If we die, we'll die among

friends," said one Mexican.

If COVID-19 was a golden opportunity for Mr Trump to erect the wall that he has long sworn to build, he did not seize it. Although a dozen Latin American countries have shut their borders completely, Mexico and the United States have kept theirs porous. Mr Trump's definition of "essential" travel is wide enough to let through lorries full of electronics. Both governments seem wary of disrupting commerce; some \$1.4bn-worth of goods crosses the border daily. The annual flow is the equivalent of nearly half of Mexico's gdp. Besides, border closures do little good once an epidemic has taken hold on both sides.

The decision to block partially the 3,200km (2,000-mile) border was mutual, announced by joint press release. Talks with the White House were "quite different from the take it or leave it" approach of past discussions, says a Mexican diplomat. Mr Trump forced Mexico (and Canada) to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement, but the process helped build relationships. The manner of the border tight-

ening shows that bridges built in those talks are still standing, says Agustín Barrios Gómez of the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations.

In theory, the restrictions keep out border-crossers who want to shop or visit people. Mexicans with work permits are exempt from the restrictions, as are Americans heading south for cheap dentistry. A supermarket attendant in Tijuana grumbles that despite California's quarantine San Diegans raid the shelves for toilet paper, pasta and rice. But in a pandemic an open border can be an asset as well as a threat. Nearly 200,000 Mexican recipients of seasonal H2-A visas will harvest American crops. Mexican-made sensors of blood-oxygen levels and virus-blocking n95 masks will be used in American hospitals. Drugs and medical equipment will head south.

Even so, traffic has slowed sharply, which will hurt output and employment. "We are gonna have to close," says a sales manager for a small firm in Tijuana that resells industrial materials. His workers cross into San Diego with tourist visas every other day to pick up supplies, which they deliver to factories on the Mexican side of the border. That is no longer possible. American citizens could do the job but will not accept the firm's low wages, the manager says. Besides, half of the factories he serves are shut, he adds.

The future is more uncertain still for the thousands of Central Americans and others on the border who await word on their applications for asylum in the United States. Their faint hopes of refuge have dimmed further: the Trump administration has stopped receiving ap-

plications and suspended hearings. Migrant camps are potential virus hotspots.

The numbers suggest that it is Mexico that should fear contagion more. They indicate that the outbreak in Mexico lags two weeks behind that of the United States. On March 25th California had 2,998 confirmed cases of covid-19. The neighbouring state of Baja California had 16. That is surely an under-count. By that date Mexico had tested about 4,500 people, compared with 422,000 in the United States.

Mexico's populist president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, is doing little to prepare Mexicans for what is coming. He continued to travel and hug supporters and encouraged families to visit restaurants, as "this strengthens the economy". Other officials are taking the virus more seriously. On March 22nd the mayor of Mexico City shut bars and banned large gatherings. Two days later the federal health ministry ramped up testing and advocacy of social distancing. That would have happened earlier if the government had collected better

evidence by testing more, say experts. The financial markets are predicting massive economic harm, from an American recession, low oil prices and a domestic outbreak of covid-19. The Mexican peso has dropped to its lowest-ever level against the dollar (see article).

Openness on the border was tested before Mr Trump and COVID-19 came along. After the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001, the United States enacted stringent inspections. The delays they caused threatened such economic damage that they "would [have] deliver[ed] to al-Qaeda the victory that it sought" had they been kept, says Alan Bersin, a former boss of United States Customs and Border Protection. The two countries fixed that by waving through "low-risk" workers with registered fingerprints, which freed border agents to watch for terrorists. That will not avert panic during a pandemic. If the disease becomes rampant in Mexico, Mr Trump could slam shut today's semi-open border.

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Although a dozen Latin American countries have shut their borders completely, Mexico and the United States have kept theirs porous

IRAN AND COVID-19

Get serious

Iran cannot fight covid-19 with conspiracy theories

AS COVID-19 began spreading across Iran in February, the regime held a rigged election. Weeks later, when nearly 10% of Iranian mps were infected and it was clear the country had a problem, the ruling clerics refused to close crowded holy spots. Even as it dug mass graves, the government hushed up the scale of the epidemic. Now its leaders are propounding conspiracy theories, such as that COVID-19 is an American bioweapon. Rejecting an offer of American aid, Iran's supreme leader said: "Possibly your medicine is a way to spread the virus more."

Officially, Iran has suffered over 27,000 cases and 2,000 deaths. All countries undercount, but Iran wilfully minimised the numbers at the outset. Hundreds of thousands have been infected and many will die. That is partly because American sanctions have made it harder to cope. But Iran's leaders have also mismanaged the crisis. Like officials elsewhere, they have been refusing to quarantine cities or ban large gatherings. Worse, they are placing their confrontational worldview above public health.

The clerics claim they are doing a fine job. Iran has produced more face masks than Italy and tested more people than Britain. Military factories are now making personal protective equipment, oxygen canisters and hospital beds. The government has turned stadiums into isolation centres and increased the number of laboratories testing for the virus from two to almost 60. It has referred 62,000 people to health facilities. Volunteers are dis-

Iran is reluctant to enforce a complete nationwide lockdown because it does not have the money to pay people to stay at home. Yet despite pleas to relax sanctions, at least temporarily, America has recently announced new ones. That bolsters Iran's argument that sanctions are keeping it from getting the help it needs

tributing hundreds of thousands of food parcels to those who cannot leave their homes. The effort is "unparalleled" in the Middle East—and even much of Europe—says an official at the who.

However, the government is doing little to stop the spread of the virus. Malls are still open. Parks are packed. Popular shrines have at last been closed. Nevertheless, many converged on the holy city of Mashhad for Nowruz, the Persian new-year festival, on March 20th. Hundreds jammed the streets of Tehran three days later to touch the coffin of a prominent soldier. On March 25th President Hassan Rouhani at last promised travel bans between cities, but he has dismissed calls to lock down the country. Other



Members of firefighters wear protective face masks, amid fear of COVID-19, as they disinfect the streets, ahead of the Iranian New Year Nowruz, in Tehran on March 18. Reuters

officials deflect blame. "A huge part of the danger Iranians face is due to the United States," says Muhammad Javad Zarif, the foreign minister.

America could certainly do more to help Iran. Its offer of aid means little as long as its sanctions remain rigid. American officials claim that the sanctions allow for the import of medical supplies. But most trade is impossible because banks will not handle transac-

tions with Iran, for fear of America's wrath. Workarounds set up by European countries, and even one by America, have failed to increase the flow of covid-fighting kit.

Iran is reluctant to enforce a complete nationwide lockdown because it does not have the money to pay people to stay at home. If millions do not show up for work, their families will go hungry. Yet despite pleas to relax sanctions, at least temporarily, America

has recently announced new ones.

That bolsters Mr Zarif's argument that sanctions are keeping Iran from getting the help it needs. But the foreign minister is being disingenuous: his government is also rejecting aid from Médecins Sans Frontières (msf). Two plane loads of equipment sent by the international ngo have been left on the tarmac at Imam Khomeini airport. A team of msf doctors was also turned away.

Perhaps they were not needed, as some officials claimed. But state media absurdly portrayed msf's efforts as part of an American spying operation. "Iran does not need hospitals established by foreigners," said a health official. Iran's leaders, it seems, prefer to confront the outside world rather than engage with it. Their prejudice will cost Iranian lives.

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We have to take into account many things like a player's education and his understanding of his position and situation and his decision-making ability."

MISBAH-UL-HAQ
PAKISTAN COACH ON PLAYERS REPORTING FIXING APPROACHES

India was supposed to start its four-month countdown to the Olympics this moment. But forced into an unprecedented, grim lockdown as the world battles the Covid-19 outbreak, sport is staring at unfathomable despair. Indian athletes though have given the country reasons to rejoice in the past. *The Indian Express* looks back at a bunch of these memories.

3 days, 11 races, 5 gold medals



It's been 35 years since she monopolised the track at the Jakarta Asian meet but mentioning Usha can still get Indians free lunches in Indonesia

NIHAL KOSHIE

RECENTLY, AN acquaintance of PT Usha was visiting Jakarta and wandered to a tourist shopping hub. A shopkeeper was curious about the country of origin. When the person replied India and Kerala, the next question was: So you know PT Usha? 'Yes' was the reply.

Immediately a discount was offered with a few freebies thrown in.

"Even after all these years, people I know sometimes use my name when they go to Jakarta. They even get things for free. I don't encourage them but it is a nice feeling that people remember you fondly and with respect for something which happened in 1985," Usha says after narrating the experience of the Indian traveller.

For those at the Senayan Madya Stadium in the Indonesian capital in late September of 1985, the Asian Athletics Championships remain etched in memory because of a 21-year-old from India who won five gold and a bronze in just five days.

Who knows, that shopkeeper may have been in the stands to witness the feat.

Gold medals came in the 100 metres, 200, 400, 400 metre hurdles and 4x400 metre relay, a haul unmatched by any Indian athlete at a continental championship till date. Usha set Asian records in the sprint events and the 400m as the whole of Asia was left spellbound by her medal-winning spree.

Usha begins by describing how she bagged the least talked-about medal, a bronze in the 4x100 metre relay. "When I got the baton for the anchor leg, the Indian team was in sixth place. The commentator was talking about the baton exchange and saying that India has PT Usha so the team could win a medal. It was really satisfying to get the team from sixth place to third and win a bronze. Remember, this was India's first medal in the 4x100 metre relay," Usha says about the start of a golden era for track and field in this country.

This was a period when cricket fever was gripping the nation like never before. Two years after Kapil Dev led India to the 1983 World Cup glory, Sunil Gavaskar's side lifted the World Championship of Cricket in Australia. In 1987, India hosted the 50-over World Cup, an event that marked the beginning of the shift of the game's power centre from its traditional bastions to the sub-continent. Cricketers had become



THOSE MONTHS THOSE MINUTES



JULY-AUGUST 1985
'It was the first time I had travelled abroad to train. This was a new experience but I enjoyed it.'

SEPTEMBER 25-29
'On one day, I ran three races. After a race, I would run to the bathroom and have a shower and be ready.'

wonderful period for Indian athletics and, if I may say so, I was to a large extent responsible for track and field being as popular as cricket in India back then. Jakarta was the start of the golden period," Usha says.

In Jakarta, just over a year after she missed out on a bronze medal in the 400 metres hurdles at the Los Angeles Olympics, Usha established herself as a great despite the great mental and physical strain of running over a dozen competitive races in just five days. There was no recovery expert by her side, no physio or masseur to help relax sore muscles. Her coach OM Nambiar was her guide and the man with multiple tasks.

When Usha was drained after running the heats and the semifinals of two separate events within a span of 30 minutes, she recharged herself with a cold shower in a bathroom at the stadium. There were no protein shakes to gulp down for recovery those days.

"On one day, I ran three races. After a race, I would run to the bathroom and have a shower and be ready for the next race. There was nothing fancy I followed as a routine. Run, rest, have a wash, and run again. Nowadays, there are experts you can turn to. If one part of your body is hurting, you can get a quick massage. I didn't need all that back then. But you had to be mentally strong, ignore the aches and pains and, of course, listen to your coach. It sounds simple, but it was not easy," Usha adds.

Over three days, she ran 11 races, including heats, in Jakarta's humidity.

The historic medal haul would not have come about, if she had listened to the coach of Filipino star Lydia de Vega. Lydia was coached by her father who went up to Usha and Nambiar and told them that an athlete was allowed to compete in just three events. Francisco had hoped Usha would drop out of the 100 metres — the event in which it was neck and neck between his daughter and the Indian athlete — and instead focus on the 400 metre hurdles and

two other events. However, they didn't take the bait.

Lydia was the fastest woman in Asia and the winner of the 100 metres gold at the New Delhi Asiad three years ago, where she had beaten Usha. For the two athletes, it wasn't just any 100 metres race, Usha recalls, "it was about pride and being the best in Asia."

"Coach Nambiar told me to run the first three events. The first event was the 100 metres in which I won gold (11.64 seconds). And then it was the 400 metres and the 400 metre hurdles. Later we realised that there was no rule that said an athlete can participate in just three events. Luckily, we didn't listen to Lydia's father."

In the 100 metres, Lydia finished third, pipped by Thailand's Ratjai Sripet. With her toughest competitor vanquished, the path ahead for Usha was relatively easy.

"It was only in the 100 metres that I had competition from Lydia. In the rest of the races, my confidence was sky high. I was sure I could win gold medals."

During the Asian Athletics Championships, Usha realised how popular she had become. Every time she stepped onto the track, the stadium resounded with her name. Missing out on an Olympic medal by one-hundredth of a second had brought her fame, but what she experienced in Jakarta was "unbelievable". At the Seoul Asian Games a year later — where she bagged four gold and a silver — her popularity would surge to new heights.

"I was more popular than the local athletes in Indonesia. Hearing my name being cheered at a packed stadium really boosted me further. I always knew that I would win medals in all the events I had entered in. I was in such good form. In Jakarta, I realised that even spectators expected me to win."

Crystal Palace getaway

The foundations of the success at the Asian meet were laid at the leafy Crystal Palace Sports Training Centre in South London a few

months earlier. Back in the day, it wasn't the norm for Indian athletes to shift their training base abroad and take their personal coaches along. But when the opportunity knocked, Usha made the trip along with Nambiar.

"It was the first time I had travelled abroad to train. This was a new experience but I enjoyed it," Usha says. She also didn't mind the change in diet and weather.

"It was windy and cold on some days yet we adjusted to the conditions and trained hard. I also took a liking to the English breakfast. I loved the bacon there. It was so juicy and tasty that I looked forward to breakfast. Eggs, toast, bacon and the salads, I hogged that. For dinner, I used to find an Indian restaurant and have tandoori chicken and rice. When I finished my stint in Crystal Palace, my haemoglobin levels were much higher compared to what it was before I left India."

Another advantage of moving her training base was that it was easier to travel to Grand Prix events in Europe where some of the best athletes were competing. Usha ran in events at Bratislava, Prague, Budapest, Ostrava and London, winning medals including a 400 metre hurdles gold at the Coco Cola Cup in London. Her consistency earned her a berth in the Grand Prix final, an event for which only the best athletes on the circuit are invited.

Usha, though, chose to focus on the Asian Athletics Championships and headed back to India to train.

"By the end of my training in Crystal Palace and after all the competitions in Europe, I felt I was in really good form. I had done well in Europe and at the Olympics but now I wanted to excel in Asia."

When Usha hung up her spikes, she had won 23 medals at the Asian Athletics Championships with 14 gold.

In 2008, she travelled with her most famous trainee Tintu Luka to Jakarta for the Asian Junior Championships. "Jakarta had changed a lot but what I achieved in that city can never be erased."

■ In Jakarta, PT Usha's gold medals came in the 100 metres, 200, 400, 400m hurdles and 4x400m relay.

■ She also won bronze in 4x100m, which was India's first ever medal in the relay category.

Games bribe trail: \$ 8.2 million, watches & cameras

REUTERS
TOKYO, MARCH 31

A BUSINESSMAN who received millions of dollars for his work on Tokyo's successful campaign to host the 2020 Olympics, which was postponed last week due to the coronavirus, said he played a key role in securing the support of a former Olympics powerbroker suspected by French prosecutors of taking bribes to help Japan's bid.

Haruyuki Takahashi, a former executive at the advertising agency Dentsu Inc, was paid \$8.2 million by the committee that spearheaded Tokyo's bid for the 2020 Games, according to financial records reviewed by Reuters. Takahashi told Reuters his work included lobbying International Olympic Committee members like Lamine Diack, the ex-Olympics powerbroker, and that he gave Diack gifts, including digital cameras and a



Haruyuki Takahashi admitted having received payments.

Seiko watch. "They're cheap," he said.

The payments made Takahashi the single largest recipient of money from the Tokyo bid committee, which was mostly funded by

Japanese companies. After his involvement in Tokyo's successful campaign, Takahashi was named to the board of the Tokyo 2020 organizing committee, a group tasked with running the summer Games after it was awarded to Japan.

Takahashi acknowledged receiving the payments but declined to give a full accounting of how he used the money. He said he urged Diack to support the Tokyo bid and denied any impropriety in those dealings. He said it was normal to provide gifts as a way of currying good relations with important officials like Diack. He said there was nothing improper with the payments he received or with the way he used the money. "You don't go empty-handed. That's common sense," Takahashi told Reuters, referring to the gifts he gave Diack.

Banking records from the Tokyo 2020 bid committee, which were examined by Reuters, show it paid around \$46,500 to Seiko Watch. A senior official at the bid told Reuters "good"

watches were handed out at parties organized as part of Tokyo's campaign to win the Olympics, although he did not specify the brand.

International Olympic Committee (IOC) regulations allowed for the giving of gifts of nominal value at the time of the 2020 bid, but didn't stipulate a specific amount.

A day before the 2013 vote on the host city, Diack informed a meeting of African Olympic representatives that he planned to support Tokyo on merit, a lawyer for the influential Senegalese sports figure told Reuters. But he didn't instruct anyone how to vote, the lawyer said. The Tokyo bid committee also paid \$1.3 million to a little-known non-profit institute run by former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, a powerful figure in Japanese sports and the head of the Tokyo Olympics organizing committee. The payments to Takahashi's company and Mori's non-profit are enumerated in banking records from the Tokyo 2020 bid.

BWF freezes rankings, placings on March 17 to decide seedings

New Delhi: The Badminton World Federation (BWF) on Tuesday decided to freeze the world rankings, saying standings as on March 17 will be the basis for entry and seedings when it restarts the international calendar that has been thrown haywire owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a clamour for freezing the world rankings with Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal, B Sai Praneeth, Parupalli Kashyap and HS Prannoy leading the way in expressing their concerns.

"The Badminton World Federation (BWF) can announce it will freeze World Rankings and World Junior Rankings until further notice. The freezing of rankings will be backdated to Week 12, which is the week following the last international tournament that was played — the YONEX All England Open 2020," BWF said in a release. "The ranking lists issued on 17 March 2020 will serve as a basis for entry and

There was a clamour for freezing the world rankings with Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal, B Sai Praneeth, and HS Prannoy leading the way in expressing their concerns.

seedings into the next international tournaments — although it is difficult to say at this stage when this may be.

"Shuttlers in the singles competition have to be inside top-16 of world rankings to qualify for the Olympics. The cut-off for doubles is also top-16. The BWF had suspended all tournaments post the All England Championships until April 12 due to the pandemic. PTI