

SAVING LIVES TOP PRIORITY,
says CM Patnaik, ordinance promulgated

AGRI, MGNREGA, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY
activities to be facilitated during lockdown

KARNATAKA CM SAYS CABINET
unanimous on extending shutdown

Extending lockdown: Odisha leads the way

Shut until April 30, state wants no rail or air; draws contours of roadmap for others

SAMPAD PATNAIK & RAVISH TIWARI
BHUBANESWAR, NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

CORONA COUNT

5865 CASES **169** DEATHS

478 RECOVERED

1,44,910 samples have been tested as on April 9, 2020

EVEN AS the Centre and states are still weighing their options on extending the 21-day lockdown beyond April 14, Odisha became the first state to clearly spell out its plan of action: that its statewide lockdown will continue till April 30. The state government also said it would recommend to the Centre to extend the national lockdown to the same date and request for rail and air services to the state to be stopped until then.

"The state Cabinet, which met today, decided that saving lives of our people is the top most priority at this juncture," Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said in a written statement that was shared by the state government on Thursday. "We have decided to extend the lockdown till April 30. We will recommend to the Government of India to extend the national lockdown (up to the same time period)... We will also request the Union Government not to start airline and railway services till April 30," the statement added.

The state also promulgated an ordinance amending a section of The Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, with a provision of imprisonment for up to two years

for those found violating the epidemic regulations.

While state after state has signalled their intention to extend the lockdown — Karnataka being the latest to say that the Cabinet wants the lockdown to be "continued for another 15 days" — Odisha's announcement is seen as a step forward, setting the tone for deliberations on exit strategies when Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with Chief Ministers on Saturday morning.

Odisha's announcement is set to impact the options being considered by other states as they formulate their exit strategies. More so, because Odisha has a relatively low coronavirus positive case load at 44 in about 5,865 cases across the country. The state has so far reported one death and two recoveries, and tested 2,841 samples.

Odisha's request to stop train and flight services to the state until April 30 is likely to have a cascading effect on any policy

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Nurses from Mumbai's KEM hospital on their way to work. The hospital has reported at least 10 COVID-19 deaths over the last week. Prashant Nadkar

No let-up in Maharashtra: 25 deaths, 229 new cases is highest single-day jump

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 9

IN ITS highest single-day spike so far, Maharashtra reported 229 fresh COVID-19 cases and 25 deaths on Thursday, taking the total count to 1,364 cases and 97 deaths.

The deaths counted today include some which occurred over the last three days but were notified Thursday.

The Union Health Ministry reported 20 deaths and 591 fresh cases across the country in the last 24 hours. The total number of cases in the country is now 5,865, of whom 169 died while

478 recovered. With 876 cases, Mumbai now accounts for more than half the total cases in Maharashtra.

However, the higher number in the state could also be due to increased tests. In the last two days, almost 10,000 samples have been tested in the state. While 20,877 samples had been tested till April 7, the number touched 30,299 on Thursday.

Pune recorded 10 deaths on Wednesday alone, its highest in a day so far; eight more people have died in the city since then. Nine deaths were reported in Mumbai, and one each in Malegaon and Ratnagiri over the

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A nurse tests positive and a quiet birthday for daughter in a ward

SOMYA LAKHANI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

ON WEDNESDAY, the daughter of a nursing officer from Delhi State Cancer Institute (DSCI) turned four. Typically, there would have been a small party at home — her eight-year-old son would have decorated their 2BHK house, while the birthday girl would have been gifted a new doll. Instead, the children and their mother spent the birthday inside a COVID-19 ward at Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality hospital.

The nursing officer from Dilshad Garden's DSCI is among 22 staffers who have tested positive for coronavirus. The test



22 of the DSCI staff have tested positive in Delhi. Praveen Khanna

was conducted on April 3 and the result came on April 6, after which she reached Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, with

her children in tow. "My husband went to visit my mother in Pathanamthitta in Kerala, as she

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Double testing samples, new target 2.5 lakh by April 14: Centre to states

VARINDER BHATIA
CHANDIGARH, APRIL 9

THE CENTRE has asked all states and Union Territories to ramp up the number of samples collected across the country for testing to at least 2.5 lakh by April 14 — when the 21-day national lockdown period ends.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Haryana Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Rajeev Arora said the target was conveyed by the Union Health Ministry in a video-conference with Health Secretaries of all states and UTs Wednesday. "We were told that 1 lakh samples have been collected in India till date, and by April 14 we have to take it up to 2.5 lakh samples," he said.

As of 9 pm Thursday, a total of 1,44,910 samples had been tested nationwide, including 30,299 from Maharashtra, from where the maximum number of positive cases (1,135) have been reported.

Based on suggestions from states, the Centre has already indicated that various restrictions on the movement of people will continue after April 14 — a final call will be taken based on the trajectory of infections after April 10.

Haryana, which has reported 156 cases so far, has sent 2,964 samples for testing out of which 2,017 have come out negative while results are awaited in 791.

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Investors unfazed by March mayhem, equity MF inflow at 12-month high

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

EVEN THOUGH stock markets went into a tailspin in March and benchmark indices crashed in line with the global trend, mutual fund investors don't seem to have pressed the panic button.

Data for March released by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) shows that net inflows into equity-oriented schemes amounted to Rs 11,722 crore, a 12-month high, and gross fund mobilisation for

equity schemes — total money invested — stood at Rs 30,109 crore, a 24-month high.

There was also an addition of 7.1 lakh new equity accounts during the month — the highest monthly addition in at least 12 months.

This, when both the Sensex and Nifty have lost 23 per cent in March as the COVID pandemic roils markets and threatens global growth.

The equity assets under management, however, fell 18 per cent over February to Rs 650,146 crore on account of the mark-to-market

losses. The overall industry average asset under management fell to Rs 24.7 lakh crore in March, from an all-time high of Rs 28.28 lakh crore in February 2020.

Data shows that equity investors took the March fall as an opportunity to invest. Despite the sharp decline of up to 13 per cent in a day in the premier indices in March and the index hitting the circuit twice in a month — forcing exchanges to shut — they not only continued with their investments but also came in with fresh investments.

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EXPLAINED Shows markets have got deeper

LOW EQUITY valuations provide an opportunity to generate higher returns when interest rates are falling and fixed deposit and small savings rates have seen deep cuts. The record inflow underlines the deepening of the market and signals investor hope that these hard times will pass.

For supply of HCQ, Trump and Bolsonaro thank Modi and India

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro thanked India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the "timely assistance" in releasing ingredients for anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine (HCQ), seen as useful in the treatment of COVID-19.

"Extraordinary times require even closer cooperation between friends. Thank you India and the Indian people for the decision on HCQ. Will not be forgotten! Thank you Prime Minister @NarendraModi for your strong leadership in helping not just India, but humanity, in this fight!" Trump tweeted late on Wednesday night.

Prime Minister Modi Thursday said India will do everything possible to help humanity's fight against COVID-19, responding to Trump thanking him for allowing the export of hydroxychloroquine. HCQ is deemed as a potential preventive drug for the deadly coronavirus. "We shall win this together," Modi said, responding to a tweet by Trump.

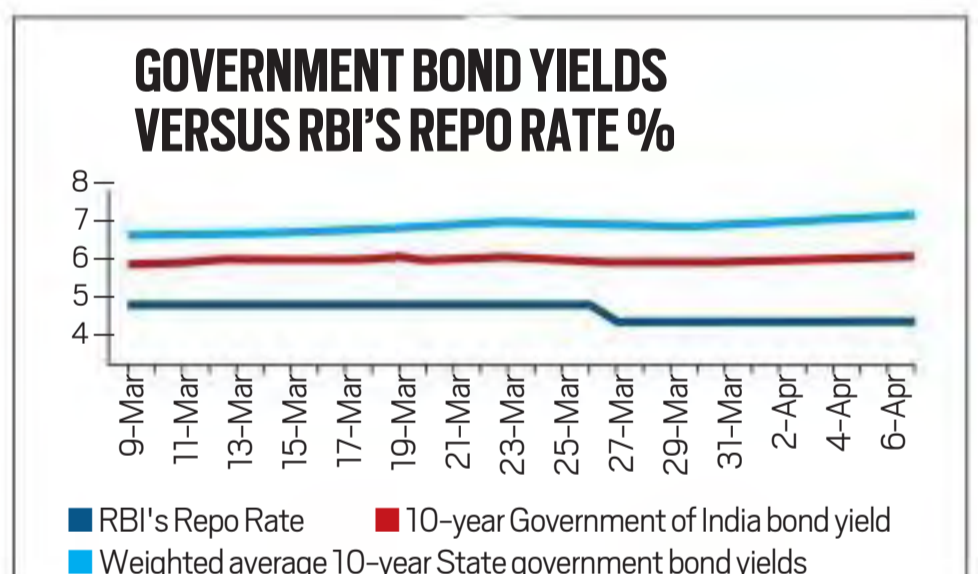
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Higher spend, slump in revenues start straining finances of states

NUSHAIBA IQBAL & HARISH DAMODARAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

THE EFFECTS of a slump in their revenues from the lockdown, coupled with higher spending to deal with the novel coronavirus pandemic, are starting to show on the finances of state governments.

On Tuesday, 19 states sought to borrow an aggregate sum of Rs 37,500 crore through sale of bonds, with tenures ranging from two to 15 years, conducted on the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) auction platform.



As against the notified amount, they were able to mobilise only Rs 32,560 crore.

But more than the shortfall, what is striking is the cost of the

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY

Play the market and pray harder.

Good Friday

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

COVID-19 POINTS TO RURAL DISTRESS

By CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT & HEMAL THAKKER PAGE 8

Bihar tests, finds migrants haven't added to state tally of positive cases

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, APRIL 9

JUST 10 DAYS ago, when migrants started returning to their homes in Bihar in large numbers, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was concerned about the potential spread of COVID-19 in the state. But after screening about 1.8 lakh migrants, who are living either with their families or at the 3,115 quarantine centres, the state is heaving a sigh of relief that none of the migrants have tested positive so far.

According to the Bihar health department, 4,991 people have



Medical staff distribute sanitisers to policemen in Patna. PTI

been tested so far, including about 2,000 migrants, those with overseas travel history, and also their relatives. Of those tested, 58 turned out to be COVID-19 posi-

tive, most with overseas travel history, or contact with persons who travelled abroad.

State government officials

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

UN flags concern to Govt Covid group: Need to fight targeting of certain sects

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

A DAY before the Union Health Ministry issued an advisory asking people not to label any community or area for the spread of COVID-19, the UN representative in India urged the government to fight "stigmatisation of certain sects of people".

On Tuesday, at the seventh meeting of the empowered group coordinating with the private sector, NGOs and international organisations, Renata Lok-

Dessallien, UN Resident Coordinator in India, "pointed out the need to address the issues of migrant labourers and fighting stigmatisation of certain sects of people," said a source who was part of the meeting chaired by NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant.

On April 2, BJP president J P Nadda had urged his party leaders to refrain from giving any "communal colour" or create any "division or differences" over the COVID-19 outbreak. He told them to support the efforts of the Prime Minister as well as that of

of communicable diseases may cause fear and anxiety leading to prejudices against people and communities, social isolation and stigma." Such behaviour, it said, may culminate into increased hostility, chaos and unnecessary social disruptions.

The health ministry issued an advisory Wednesday: "Public health emergencies during an outbreak

of communicable diseases may cause fear and anxiety leading to prejudices against people and communities, social isolation and stigma." Such behaviour, it said, may culminate into increased hostility, chaos and unnecessary social disruptions.

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Page 1 Anchor In zero-case Nanded, a worry: 4,000 stranded Punjab pilgrims

IRAM SIDDIQUE
NANDED, APRIL 9

ON WEDNESDAY, 12 Indonesians who arrived in Nanded on March 15 after attending the Tabligi Jamaat gathering in Delhi — linked to many coronavirus cases — finished quarantine with their COVID-19 test results negative. It was the end of just one excruciating wait for the administration in the district, among only nine in worst-hit Maharashtra with zero cases. Nanded has on

TEST REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

TRACKING THE VIRUS, LOCKDOWN

its minds another gathering: of nearly 4,000 pilgrims from Punjab stranded at the historic Gurdwara Langar Saheb.

Resident Deputy Collector Dr Sachin Khalla said all the 3,755 pilgrims have been screened for

symptoms of COVID-19 such as cold and sore throat over the past two days, and none is so far showing any. However, the tougher part is ensuring that the pilgrims don't venture out of the premises of the gurdwara, one of the five most prominent Sikh shrines in the country that draws nearly 30 lakh visitors a year.

Section 144 has been imposed in the area, with three policemen guarding a major road leading to the gurdwara, and a barricade to stop vehicles.

The pilgrims arrived between March 1 and March 20 and have



A langar at Gurdwara Langar Saheb in Nanded. Express

been unable to head back. They have moved into the gurdwara's five 'hostels' — a total of 1,200 rooms, in different sizes.

The administration is aware of the risks of having so many under one roof amidst the pandemic, with little means of ensuring social distancing. Nanded Superintendent of Police Vijay Kumar Magar says that after Section 144 was invoked, the first two days posed a major challenge as pilgrims kept heading into the city.

"After that we held a meeting with religious heads and asked

them to keep the pilgrims in their rooms and even serve food to them there instead of in the community kitchen," says Magar.

But that is easier said than done. Bachendar Singh, a priest at the gurdwara, says their faith does not allow them to turn anyone away from a langar, including non-Sikhs. "The concept of a langar was never to restrict people. Langars are not constructed with gates. How do we even close?" he asks.

Every day, as people sit in rows to eat and the women make the meals of rice, roti, dal and

sabzi, food is prepared for nearly four lakh people, to be sent throughout Nanded and its surrounding areas. The wheat, rice and dal supplies for the gurdwara are generally received in the form of donations twice a year from Punjab, while other things are purchased locally.

The stranded pilgrims say the only way to ensure their safety and that of others is to get them home. "If the government wants us to maintain social distance, they should make arrangements for us to return," says

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COUNTRIES ARE RETURNING MASKS IMPORTED FROM CHINA: HERE'S WHY

In recent weeks, Spain, The Netherlands, Turkey and Australia have returned Chinese-bought masks, prompting the Chinese government to suggest that nations have not "double checked" the products before purchasing them.

VIDEO OF THE DAY



MUMBAI'S NSCI QUARANTINE FACILITY

Mumbai's NSCI Dome has been converted into a quarantine centre

TECH



AN INDIAN RETHINKING OF THE STETHOSCOPE

AyuSynk increases the distance between doctor and patient

EXPRESS AUDIO
Tracking the coronavirus curve in India

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

Today on the 3 Things podcast, we talk about the rate at which the virus has spread so far and when the curve likely to flatten

FROM PAGE ONE

Maharashtra

last three days. While some of these deaths were reported by the state government on Wednesday itself, the others were reported today.

New COVID-19 cases were reported in Mumbai (143), followed by Pune, Pimpri Chinchwad, Yavatmal, Aurangabad, Navi Mumbai, Kalyan, Sindhadurg, Vasai, Mira Bhayander and Thane.

State Health Minister Rajesh Tope said that in order to contain the transmission of the virus in Mumbai, especially in Dharavi where 14 cases have been reported so far, the government is using drones and CCTV cameras to monitor crowded areas.

"We need to observe strict lockdown in these areas. I have requested the home minister to deploy the State Disaster Relief Force to enforce the lockdown," he said.

"In Dharavi, we noticed that public toilets are over-crowded and have sanitisation issues. Each toilet seat is used by over 100-200 people. We will use the fire brigade to clean the public toilets with pipes," he said.

The state government is also trying to deliver ready-to-eat food at the doorstep through community kitchens. In slums, where 10-15 people share a small room, schools will be opened to provide accommodation.

Following the death of a 101-year-old woman at the Brahma Samaj Hospital on Charni Road, Mumbai, on April 6, the BMC has directed the hospital to test all its staffers. The woman also suffered from hypertension.

At least two of those who died in the state so far were below 40 years: a 38-year-old woman who died on April 7, and a 27-year-old pregnant woman who died on April 4.

Over 35,000 people across the state are under home quarantine, while another 4,731 have been quarantined in hospitals, hotels and government institutions.

Meanwhile, the Centre has announced a Rs 15,000 crore India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package, as announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address to the nation on March 24. The funds sanctioned will be utilised for immediate COVID-19 Emergency Response (Rs 7,774 crore) and for medium-term support (1-4 years).

Nurse tests +ve

is unwell. Then the lockdown happened and he's been unable to return home," she said over the phone from the hospital bed.

She moved to Delhi from Pathanamthitta 15 years ago and began working as a nurse. A decade ago, she joined DSCI, where she works in the cancer ward. "From administering medicines to checking the catheter, IV tubes, listening to patients' requests, explaining to

their relatives about treatment and medicines... we do it all. Once I recover, I will go back to work. There is no other option," she said.

"We work in three shifts — 8 am-2 pm, 2 pm-8 pm, 8 pm-8 am — and the roster keeps changing. All these years, I didn't have to worry about the children because my husband would manage. When he left for Kerala mid-March, the house-help pitched in, but after the lockdown even she couldn't come. So I would drop off the children to a friend's house nearby and then go for my shift," she said.

Once cases of DSCI staffers testing positive started emerging, she started getting nervous and the rules at home changed. "I would return home from my shift, immediately rush to the bathroom, take a bath, wash all clothes, and then see the children. I told them 'no hugging mummy'... It's hard to explain that to children. I am most worried about them," she said.

After she tested positive, she had no choice but to take her children to the COVID ward with her. The siblings tested negative Wednesday. "I was on the phone all Wednesday, trying to find a place for them to stay since my husband is still stuck in Kerala. Finally, a friend took them in. Now I talk to them on video call. It's hard, I worry for their safety, their health and diet, but I have started developing symptoms now — headache and cough. They can't be around me," she said.

She is one of 18 nursing officers and orderlies at DSCI to have tested positive for coronavirus. Speaking to The Indian Express, many of them had earlier alleged they were not given PPEs even after a doctor there tested positive.

She said she will return to nursing — a profession she fell in love with as a young girl in Pathanamthitta — and hoped that "the PPEs will be there".

Double testing

"Detailed directions have been issued to doctors and medical staff that another round of testing shall be launched across the state from Friday," Arora said.

On the state's strategy to achieve the Centre's target in the next five days, he said: "We took Haryana's figures of sample-testing, and decided that we shall also increase it by 1.5 times, going by the formula adopted by the Government of India. Since our number today (Thursday) is around 3,000 samples, we shall be taking it up to around 7,000-7,500 in the next five-six days."

Arora said 450 samples will be tested in each of Haryana's hotspots, including the four districts of Gurugram, Nuh, Palwal and Faridabad, and a minimum of 125 samples each in all other areas. "A few more samples will be tested in Panchkula, Panipat and Ambala," he said.

Arora said the criteria for identifying people for testing is "already set". "For instance, our

Odisha to stay shut until April 30, draws broad contours of a roadmap for others

decision on resumption of Railway services.

This request has a bearing on the migrant-origin as well as migrant-destination states as they formulate their exit strategies after April 14. According to the 2011 Census migration data that was released last year, Odisha is the fifth largest state in terms of net migration origins.

Odisha's request to stop trains and flights is a clear signal to migrants from the state to stay put in their places for the moment. Surat, India's third largest migrant magnet,

for example, hosts a large number from Odisha.

"Given the slump in economic activities, there is all likelihood of all migrants rushing back to the native places at the very first opportunity. This will compromise whatever gains are made in breaking the outbreak transmission in the three weeks of the lockdown. This is weighing on our mind while considering exit strategies," said a source who was present in the last meeting of the informal group of ministers on this issue.

Odisha's decision has great

significance for states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and West Bengal, which are top migrant exporters to other states, according to the 2011 Census.

If these states decide to take Odisha's cue, this will mean additional responsibility for the net migrant host states — Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka and Punjab in that order, according to the 2011 Census — to manage the economic anxiety among this section of population within their jurisdiction.

Given how several states

have relaxed lockdown rules for agricultural operations, some states can use migrants in their rural areas for rabi harvesting operations. However, the situation in the urban areas may need a different solution, given the clampdown on economic activities.

Patnaik too signalled that the lockdown norms could be less stringent in rural areas, saying "activities related to agriculture, animal husbandry, and MGNREGS will be facilitated during the lockdown period following social distance norms".

Equity mutual fund inflows at 12-month high



While the gross fund mobilisation by the industry in the equity schemes amounted to Rs 30,109 crore in March, the redemptions for the month stood at Rs 18,386 crore, resulting in a net inflow of Rs 11,722 crore.

This is in sharp contrast to what has been seen in the past. During the global financial crisis in 2008-09, when the Sensex fell sharply 24 per cent in October 2008, equity mutual funds had seen a net outflow of Rs 706 crore.

This reversal of trend underlines how domestic in-

vestors have emerged as a strong counterbalance against foreign portfolio investors — a

sign that the markets have deepened. Even in March, as FPIs sold

their their holdings worth a net of Rs 118,203 crore, DIIs (domestic institutional investors) pumped in a net of Rs 55,595 crore into the capital markets.

Debt assets under management fell from Rs 12.63 lakh crore in February to Rs 11.47 lakh crore in March. Said N S Venkatesh, CEO, AMFI: "The decline on the debt side is on account of quarter-end phenomena... banks maintaining capital adequacy norms and corporates fulfilling advance tax obligations. These funds will return in April."

Bihar migrants

said a total of about 1.8 lakh migrants returned to Bihar from Delhi, Punjab, Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh before and during the lockdown. Of this, almost one lakh migrants got back to their families, and are now nearing completion of their 14-day quarantine at home. Their first-level screening happened first at inter-state borders, and later in their respective districts.

"We first screened 27,300 migrants living at 3,115 quarantine centres at schools or panchayat buildings. In the second phase, we screened over 55,000 people having returned from 'hotspot' states such as Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka and Delhi. Our doctors assessed that less than one per cent in both the phases were symptomatic cases," Bihar Principal Secretary (Health) Sanjay Kumar told The Indian Express.

"But most of those who tested Covid-19 positive are people who travelled to Middle East countries or have Tablighi Jamaat connection," Kumar said.

Bihar Principal Secretary (Disaster Management) Pratyaya Amrit said it was "a very happy sign that we have so far no positive case from migrants despite

UN to Govt

state governments irrespective of which party was in power. A leader present at the meeting said: "This was reiterated when the Tablighi issue came up. There is a directive that no one should make it a communal issue. Only leaders of the minority community can comment on that if they wish to. We have to be united in our fight against the virus."

Many supporters of the party, especially on social media, cited the outbreak to fuel campaigns like "Coronajihad" and "Markaz Conspiracy".

their vulnerability" as they crossed inter-state and Indo-Nepal borders till the national lockdown was announced. "We hope we do not get any positive case from the migrants in further tests," he said.

Amrit said all the 20 positive cases from Siwan are persons with overseas travel or contact with persons who had a travel history. "Four positive cases from Begusarai are possibly because of two Tablighi groups which travelled through some parts of the district. We have sealed some mosques to prevent any further spread in Begusarai," he said.

HCQ supply

"Fully agree with you President @realDonaldTrump. Times like these bring friends closer," he said, adding that the India-US partnership is "stronger than ever". "India shall do everything possible to help humanity's fight against COVID-19," the Prime Minister said.

Brazil's Bolsonaro, in his address to the nation Wednesday, said, "As a result of my direct conversation with the Prime Minister of India, we will receive, until Saturday, raw material to continue producing hydroxychloroquine, so that we can treat covid-19 patients, as well as malaria, lupus and arthritis."

Nanded

Sukhwinder Kaur, who arrived at the gurdwara on March 18

"I thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Indian people for this very timely assistance to the Brazilian people."

Brazil has the highest number of Covid-19 cases in South America with more than 14,000 infections and almost 700 deaths, while the US has emerged as the epicentre of the pandemic now with more than 4 lakh cases and 14,000 deaths. In a letter following his phone conversation with Modi, Bolsonaro had invoked the Ramayan, comparing HCQ to the Sanjeevani booti (herb) in the epic. "Just as Lord Hanuman brought the holy medicine from the Himalayas to save the life of Lord Rama's brother Lakshmana, and Jesus healed those who were sick and restored the sight of Bartimeu, India and Brazil will overcome this global crisis," Bolsonaro said in his letter to Modi.

India is the largest manufacturer and exporter of hydroxychloroquine in the world. Last Saturday, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) had banned exports of HCQ and its ingredients, given the rise in cases of Covid-19 in India. This ban was reversed Monday, the day Trump threatened retaliation if India did not lift the ban.

Higher spend

monies raised. The weighted average yield (interest) on 10-year securities in the latest auction was 7.81%. Some states paid more (Jammu & Kashmir 8.07%, Arunachal Pradesh 7.97%, Nagaland and Manipur 7.95%, Assam 7.92%, Haryana 7.87%, Goa 7.84% and Uttarakhand 7.83%) and some less (Tamil Nadu 7.71%, Maharashtra 7.72% and Karnataka 7.74%). Rajasthan had to shell out 8.01% for a lower seven-year maturity state development loan and could still mop up only Rs 670 crore out of the targeted Rs 1,000 crore.

The 7.81% average rate for 10-year bonds in the April 7 auction was higher than the weighted yields recorded earlier on March 30 (7.3%), March 23 (7.51%), March 17 (7.1%) and March 9 (6.86%).

Simply put, the borrowing costs for states have gone up by

with her husband and their daughter.

Kulwinder Singh, 35, is struggling to obtain a drug for his 58-year-old mother Jaswinder Kaur, who has breast cancer. They had left home in Kapurthala, Punjab, on March 20 with dose for five days, hoping to be back home by March 26. But then came the 21-day nationwide lockdown starting March 24. "The medical shop in the vicinity does not have the medicine. I have been looking everywhere," says Kalwinder.

Amrik Singh, 47, says he paid Rs 60,000, against the usual rate of Rs 45,000, to book a private vehicle on March 29 to take his family of 10 back to Punjab. But their vehicle was stopped at Hingoli and returned to Nanded. According to him, some private vehicles are asking as much as Rs 1.25 lakh to take them home.

Head priest Baba Balwinder Singh says they have readied trucks and 10 other vehicles that can take the pilgrims back if clearances are given.

The Divisional Railway Manager, Upinder Singh, says he has received multiple requests to run a special train for the pilgrims, including from MLA Pratap Chiklikar. "We are urging the Railway Minister to run a train between Nanded and Amritsar as, to travel by road to Punjab, permission will have to be granted by three states. I have written a letter to Home Minister Amit Shah as well," says Chiklikar.

However, authorities remain apprehensive about making an exception as it might lead to a flood of similar demands. Chiklikar says an estimated 4.5 crore people are stranded in different states away from their homes.

Meanwhile, Collector Khalla hopes their fears remain unfounded. The Tablighi Jamaat crisis involved 70,000 people who returned to Nanded via Mumbai and Pune. "They were put into 14 days of home quarantine and two different teams formed to ensure people observe it," he says. None has so far tested positive.

India rejects China reference to J&K at UN

"respect India's sovereignty and territorial integrity" and that it would "recognise and condemn the scourge of cross-border terrorism that affect the lives of the people of India, including in Jammu and Kashmir".

"We reject the reference to Jammu and Kashmir in a statement made by the spokesperson of the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations. China is well aware of India's consistent position on this issue. The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir

has been, is and shall continue to be an integral part of India. Issues related to Jammu and Kashmir are internal matter to India."

A spokesman for the Chinese mission to the UN had said that Beijing's position on Kashmir remains unchanged as he rejected claims that the country, during its presidency of the Security Council in March, had ignored Pakistan's call for urgent consideration of the decades-old dispute at the 15-member body. "The question of Kashmir re-

almost one percentage point in less than a month's time. During the same period, the RBI's repo or overnight lending rate has fallen by 75 basis points (the cut from 5.15% to 4.4% was effected on March 27), while yields on 10-year Government of India bonds have also risen by nearly 0.35 percentage points. The gap between the 10-year state government bond yields and the repo rate has doubled to 3.41 percentage points in the last one month (see chart).

"There are no buyers for state bonds, as there's no clarity on how much they would really need to borrow in the coming days. Goods and services tax collections are down and so are the revenues from fuel, liquor, stamp duty and registration charges. At the same time, the states are incurring bulk of the on-the-ground expenditures on containing COVID-19," bond market sources told The Indian Express.

This fiscal uncertainty has been compounded by the RBI, in its indicative calendar released on March 31, tentatively placing the total quantum of borrowing by state governments in the April 7 auction at Rs 26,100 crore. That figure was subsequently revised to Rs 37,500 crore, a steep jump from the notified amounts of Rs 22,394-26,907.5 crore for the previous four weekly auctions.

"The bond market is very illiquid today. There's too much supply of government paper, whereas nobody has the appetite to buy. This is particularly so in long-duration securities, where investors risk mark-to-market losses from their prices falling in the event of yields going up (bond prices and yields move in opposite directions). So, they would naturally demand higher interest rates," the sources pointed out.

In this environment of a "buyers' strike", state government won't find it easy to raise funds, even if the Centre were to permit them to borrow more. States are currently mandated to keep their fiscal deficits within 3% of GDP. A one percentage point relaxation will give them latitude to borrow an extra Rs 200,000 crore or so, but this will not really work in a "broken" bond market.

"The states badly need cash, whether to pay salaries or buy ventilators and personal protective equipment. Instead of going to the market, they should be enabled to borrow more directly from the RBI. The central bank has since April 1 increased the existing ways and means advances limits (for states to borrow at the repo rate) by 30%, apart from allowing them to be in overdraft (borrowing at repo plus 2%) for 21 continuous working days, from the earlier 14 days. But these need to be further eased. Also, the Centre could direct the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation or Life Insurance Corporation of India to front-load their investments in state government bonds," the sources said.

Pakistan pledges \$3 million to SAARC fund

inviting all SAARC countries was held on Wednesday to discuss the impact of travel restrictions and the larger COVID-19 situation on intra-regional trade.

All SAARC countries barring Pakistan participated in the video conference. "Demonstrating keen shared interest and a problem-solving approach in the present challenging circumstances, all countries contributed actively to the discussions on a wide-ranging trade related agenda. It was recognised that the Covid-19

pandemic is likely to have a considerable adverse impact on trade in the SAARC region. In order for the countries to deal with the situation, it was stressed that new ways and means be jointly identified to sustain and expand the intra-regional trade until the normal trade channels are fully restored. The imperative need to maintain essential trade within the SAARC region was viewed as an important thrust area for favourable consideration," a statement by the Ministry of External Affairs said.

Pakistan's perspective in this regard was also conveyed during a telephone conversation between its Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood and SAARC secretary general Esala Ruwan Weerakoon on Thursday.

Meanwhile, as follow-up action of the announcement made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the video conference of SAARC leaders on March 15, a video conference of senior trade officials,

DAY after the Chinese mission to the United Nations said that Jammu and Kashmir remains high on the UN Security Council's agenda, India rejected the reference and asked Beijing to refrain from commenting on its internal affairs.

Anurag Srivastava, spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, said New Delhi also expects that China would

mainly high on the Council's agenda," the spokesman had said in a statement. "China pays close attention to the current situation, and China's position on the Kashmir issue remains unchanged," he added.

3 THE OUTBREAK THE CITY

ARRESTED MAN IS 42-YEAR-OLD INTERIOR DESIGNER

Accusing them of spreading virus, man assaults Safdarjung doc, sister

ASTHA SAXENA & MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

A 29-YEAR-OLD resident doctor from Safdarjung Hospital and her younger sister were allegedly assaulted by a 42-year-old man Wednesday night when they were buying fruit and groceries outside their residence in South Delhi's Gautam Nagar.

Police have arrested the man, Sanjeev Sharma, an interior designer, and registered an FIR at Hauz Khas police station under IPC sections 354 (molestation), 509 (outraging the modesty of women), 323 (causing hurt) and

341 (wrongful restraint).

The incident took place around 9.30 pm. "We were picking up fruits when he started asking us to maintain a distance of one metre from each other. Initially, we listened to him peacefully and did not react much. While he kept talking about social distancing, I mentioned that we both are doctors too. He immediately lost his cool and started blaming us for spreading coronavirus," said the 29-year-old, who hails from Uttar Pradesh and lives on rent in the capital.

While she is a junior resident doctor at the emergency department, her sister is preparing for her postgraduate entrance exams. "He kept saying we are the reason

for transmission. He said, 'Tum logon ki wajah se coronavirus phail raha hai duniya mein, tum jaise gande doctors ki wajah se (coronavirus is spreading across the country because of dirty doctors like you)'. He threatened to file a police complaint, and when he realised we weren't scared, he came and slapped me, twisted my arm and pushed my sister," she said.

Dr Manish, president of the Resident Doctors' Association at Safdarjung Hospital, said the incident had left the sisters traumatised: "The groceries and fruits they had bought were scattered... We took them to the hospital's mess late at night. They were not even in a condition to talk."

Delhi Police spokesperson

Mandeep Singh Randhawa confirmed Sharma's arrest and said that he has assured all doctors and hospital staff that efforts would be made to keep them safe, and security would be tightened at hospitals.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also took note of the incident: "I found out that two doctors were mistreated when they were buying something yesterday. They were told that they will spread coronavirus. This behaviour will not be tolerated. The doctors and nurses are saving our lives. If they stop working, we will be in a very dire situation. They are facing two-pronged issues. On one hand, they are putting themselves in danger as they

treat patients. On the other, people are misbehaving with them instead of applauding them. I met the L-G and several officers, including the Commissioner of Police in the morning. It has been communicated that this behaviour will not be tolerated. Such people will be punished and strict action will be taken against those who are behaving in this disgusting manner."

The Federation of Resident Doctors' Association, an umbrella body of resident doctors in Delhi, has written to the Union Home Minister to take appropriate action in such cases. "Any act of violence against doctors should be made a non-bailable offence," the association wrote.

New app helps keep track of those under home quarantine

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

IT WAS well past midnight on Thursday when an alarm went off at the control room of the South District administration and display monitors threw up a red notification. A person, advised home quarantine, had just stepped out of his home in violation of norms. By then, the person had been alerted of the violation through an app on his phone installed by the administration. But he chose to disregard the alarm, and spent 30 minutes outside. In less than 24 hours, police had been asked to lodge an FIR against him.

The tech intervention, devised by the South Delhi district administration, is likely to be adopted across districts in the capital to check home-quarantine violations and contain the spread of COVID-19.

On Thursday, the district also started using another app for door-to-door surveys of households in containment zones. During this, volunteers feed central servers with real-time data on persons with fever or cough; information on their travel history abroad; contact with confirmed positive cases; and any possible link with the Tablighi Jamaat gathering at Nizamuddin Markaz.

While the app to check quarantine violations has been developed and made available free of cost to district authorities by a Bengaluru-based firm, the containment zone survey app has been developed in-house, said District Magistrate (South) B M Mishra.

He added that if there is an apprehension that a person has stepped out after leaving the phone at home, they are called and asked to send a selfie. The app sends alerts when a person crosses a 50-100 metres radius from his place of residence.

Lawyer Apar Gupta, one of the



Gandhi Park near Hauz Rani is one of two containment zones in the South District. Renuka Puri

petitioners in the landmark Right to Privacy case, said the Delhi government must make it clear under which legal framework such tech interventions are covered.

On the quarantine app, Gupta said: "To my knowledge, even the broad powers under the Epidemic Diseases Act — which are available to the Delhi government and have been used by it to make rules — do not authorise such an application. Without being situated within a legal framework, there will be threats to privacy; even arbitrary action can result from it. Second, such an app by itself is placing a restriction without a clear legal consequence. What if the health condition of a person deteriorates and needs to be shifted to a hospital? Hence, all such app developments need to be done with a level of legality that displays foresight rather than acting in haste and panic."

Mishra said the administration is taking care of the legal aspects as well.

Meanwhile, Chief Secretary Vijay Dev said, "I have ordered it (the apps) to be upscaled for all districts to use."

Mishra said that so far, the app has been installed on phones of around 20 persons, while the rest will be brought under the surveillance net soon. He has or-

dered lodging of two FIRs based on violations caught by the app so far. The Delhi government has also handed numbers of over 27,000 people, advised home quarantine, to police to check violations by tracking their phones.

The app on household surveys is also proving useful for the administration, as a heat map on the number of persons down with ailments such as fever and cough is being created in real-time.

"The map will also have details of those who came in touch with COVID-19 patients or Markaz members. This way, we can intervene quickly and send medical teams wherever required for sampling purposes, or ambulances if hospitalisation is required. The survey is being done by teams of civil defence volunteers, ASHA workers, ANMs, malaria inspectors, among others. Previously, it was being done manually. But the compilation and analysis of data was taking time, hindering quick decision-making," he added.

There are two containment zones in the South district — a lane in Hauz Rani and one in Sangam Vihar, housing a population of around 2,000 people. Sealing will remain in force for about 14 days, officials said.



THE WAIT

People in a queue for free food at Mayur Vihar Phase I, Thursday. Anil Sharma

Family says assaulted after 'diya jalao' event

SAKSHI DAYAL
GURGAON, APRIL 9

THREE PEOPLE have been arrested by Palwal Police for allegedly attacking a family with bricks, stones, iron rods, and sticks during the countrywide 'diya jalao' initiative Sunday evening. The complainant claimed that the accused, allegedly enraged that they had turned on their lights, barged into their house — even though it was well past 9 pm. The PM had given a call to switch lights off at 9 pm for 9 minutes.

In his complaint to police, Dhanpal, a resident of Pingore village in Palwal, says he was at home with his family of seven when 'some antisocial elements' barged into their home at 9.30 pm. They allegedly used casteist slurs before threatening to turn off all the lights of their house "even though the Prime Minister had given the time from 9 pm to 9.09 pm...which we followed", the complaint states.

"The antisocial elements... forced their way into my house, used caste slurs, and when we opposed, they beat us with sticks, bricks, stones, and iron rods, broke items, and looted our home," alleged Dhanpal.

"The glass of my doors and windows broke, and my cars were heavily damaged," he said, adding that the men also threatened them with "more serious consequences" if they initiated any legal action.

"An FIR was registered regarding the matter Tuesday," said Jitendra Kumar, SHO of the Sadar Palwal police station. "Three people, Ankit, Sachin and Pawan, have been arrested and remanded in judicial custody. The other accused are still absconding."

35 workers found inside Bengali Market pastry shop, FIR filed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

DELHI POLICE has registered an FIR against the owner of a pastry shop in Mandir Marg's Bengali Market after 35 workers were found living inside Wednesday night. Police said the workers were found inside a small room in "unhygienic conditions".

On Wednesday, the entire market was sealed after three COVID-19 cases were traced to another sweet shop in Mandir Marg. Among the three is the owner of the sweet shop, who lives with his family on Babar Road. This sparked off a door-to-

door survey to trace contacts in the market and Babur Road by police, District Magistrate (New Delhi), New Delhi Municipal Council and health officials.

According to DCP (New Delhi) Eish Singhal, it was during the survey that they found several workers of the Bengali Pastry shop living on the rooftop or behind the shop. "All 35 workers were removed from the shop — 33 were shifted to shelter homes and two were taken to a hospital as they showed symptoms of COVID-19," he said.

Police said the men were tested and their results were negative. They were then shifted to a quarantine centre in Mandir

Marg. A case has been registered at Barakhamba Road police station against the owner under sections of the Epidemics Act and IPC for violating social-distancing and lockdown rules.

Meanwhile, the sweet shop owner and two others were sent to a hospital and four other members of the family home quarantined. "We screened his family members, his son and their cook also tested positive. It is suspected that the owner came in contact with a customer, probably a foreign national, at the market," said Dr Anand from Charak Hospital.

Bengali Market is one of the 23 containment zones identified in the capital.

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S4 21/20 9.4.2020

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(sd/-) Managing Director

8 men arrested for beating up migrant workers in Manesar

SAKSHI DAYAL
GURGAON, APRIL 9

A DAY after migrant workers living in a three-storey building in Manesar's Aliyar village were beaten up by 20-25 local residents, police Thursday arrested eight men for the crime — only to find that they were among those "assisting" a committee constituted by the panchayat to enforce lockdown in the area.

Police said the accused — Ravi (36), Narendra (39), Pritam, Ramesh, Alok, Ravindra, Rahul, and Sudhir (31) — are residents of Bas Hariya village 500 metres away. "The accused were among those helping a committee formed by the village panchayat to distribute ration and inspire people to stay at home, and also keep an eye on those wandering around," said Subhash Boken, PRO of Gurgaon Police.

The accused, police say, claimed they were at a vegetable shop next to the establishment where the violence took place and were trying to tell the shopkeeper to remain open only between 8 am and 11 am, and 4 pm and 8 pm. "They claimed that tenants living in the next building started making noises and poking fun at them. They claimed this had

happened on two instances earlier as well. The accused claimed the two groups got into an argument, which eventually led to the fight," said the PRO.

The complainant, however, alleged that the accused barged into the building, which houses around 600 workers — some of whom work at the Maruti Manesar plant — armed with cricket bats and hockey sticks.

"They pulled people out of their rooms; those who were bathing were also dragged and beaten," said Rajkishore from Bihar, who escaped by locking himself in his third-floor room.

Residents alleged locals had been harassing them since the lockdown began. "The administration has allowed people to step out for essentials... If we are doing anything wrong, police or administration should take action, who are these people?" said Rajkishore.

Another worker from Jharkhand, who has been residing in the building for the last three years, said, "I was eating when they broke open the door and started beating us. They didn't even explain why. We haven't slept all night because we are scared the mob will return. We don't want to be here; if we had some means, we would have left."

GONDWANA UNIVERSITY, GADCHIROLI
(A State University Established by Government of Maharashtra)
Complex, MIDC Road, Gadchiroli, Dist - Gadchiroli, Pin Code - 442605.
Employment Notice No. GUG/33/2020 Date 20/03/2020
CORRIGENDUM
No. GUG/Est./1376/2020 Date:- 10/04/2020
In continuation to the Employment Notice No. GUG/33/2020 dated 20/03/2020 published on the university website www.unigug.ac.in regarding Appointment of Professor, Associate Professor and Assistant Professor, Please note that in the context of lockdown due to corona virus, it is directed to all applicants, that the university has developed online process for filling up of application form alongwith fees. The last date of receipt of application form against the said advertisement has been extended up to **11th May, 2020**. Also note that the posts reserved for VJ-A category are interchangeable to NT-B, NT-C & NT-D as per Govt. Resolutions.
Other terms and conditions of the said advertisement remain unchanged.
Date:- 10/04/2020
Place:- Gadchiroli
(Dr. Ishwar Mohurley)
Registrar
Gondwana University, Gadchiroli.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR POLICE
DISTRICT POLICE HEADQUARTERS JAMMU
191-2561578 (O), 0191-254780
(F), email-sspjammu@jkpolice.gov.in
LOOK OUT NOTICE

As reported by I/C PP Gadigarh, Jammu vide communication No. 18-5-1/PPGG dated 06.04.2020, that one unidentified male dead body was lying in Ranbir Canal, Dharp Gadigarh, Jammu. Accordingly, an Inquest proceeding U/S 174 Cr. PC vide DDR No. 11 dated 06.04.2020 was initiated at PP Gadigarh, Jammu and dead body was shifted to mortuary room of GMCH, Jammu.

For the identification of unidentified male dead body below description roll is required to be published on daily newspapers for identification / Public in general, having any clue related to the unidentified dead body, kindly communicate the same on the below mentioned contact/Telephone numbers.

Description Roll:
Age : About 34/40 years
Height : 5 feet 7 inch
Dress : Black T-shirt & Black Trouser

- Contacts/Telephone Numbers:**
1. DPO, Jammu : 0191-2547807, 0191-2561578
 2. SSP Jammu Mail I.D : sspjammu@jkpolice.gov.in
 3. PCR Jammu : 0191-2542000
 4. SP City South : 0191-2430002
 5. SDPO City South : 0191-2433778
 6. Landline of P/S Satwari : 01912-2430364

Shwetambri Sharma, DySP(HQ)
For Sr. Superintendent of Police, Jammu

DIPJ-59

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DAVP2220113/0001/2021

At containment zones, police & volunteers brush aside fear to keep supply line going

ANAND MOHAN J NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

POLICEMEN REPORTING for duty at the Sangam Vihar containment zone have no difficulty finding Gali-6, where around 200 people are now barred from stepping out of their homes. A power transmission tower in the middle of the road is a handy landmark.

A day after 22 pockets in the capital were designated as containment zones, the entry to this lane is barred by two police barricades tied with a rope. Outside, 14 men — police and civil defence volunteers — surround the lane from all sides.

Policemen are also tasked with taking down ration orders from residents to ensure they get essentials at home. But most shudder at the thought of entering the colony. A constable points to a pink house with a red notice at its entrance: Six members of the family have tested positive for coronavirus. "The house is right



At Sangam Vihar, Thursday. Renuka Puri

at the entrance. The ground floor was sealed off but there are people living on the upper floors. It is difficult for us to enter," the constable says.

The fear is exacerbated by the fact that the neighbours have not been tested for coronavirus. Geeta, who lives next to the pink house, says, "Nobody tested our family." Officials say they have started mapping the area, but

testing is yet to begin.

The day starts with sanitation workers of the SDMC disinfecting the locality. Local volunteers venture into the lane and take down orders for rations. Policemen then drop the ration at their doorstep, along with a container filled with water from a DJB water tanker stationed outside.

Around three adjoining lanes surrounding Gali-6 have also

been 'contained'. CRPF officers patrol the streets, waving off anyone who ventures out of home.

At the Gandhi Park containment zone, a few metres away, a mohalla clinic is the only establishment open in the vicinity. Dr Indra has treated 65 patients since morning — none of them from Gandhi Park.

Right behind the clinic, roads are empty but a building shows signs of life — clothes put out to dry, plants creeping down, and a face mask hanging over a wire. Mohammad Alam, a resident, says he is about to run out of diabetes medication. "Teen din ki dawai bachhi hai", Alam says.

Below his house, civil defence volunteers sanitise currency notes used to buy food for residents. They ensure a steady supply of vegetables, rice and a handful of fruits for the 1,000 people in the containment zone. Riyazuddin, a civil defence volunteer, manages without a single policeman. "People who get sick are the only ones allowed to leave.

Last night a woman fell sick; she was then moved out," he says.

In Bengali Market, which is also under a similar lockdown, anyone who wants to enter first needs to show proof of residence. Even Army officers who cite official work are stopped at the entrance.

Residents of the colony have been demanding fresh fruit and vegetables from the police, who have made a list of local grocers in the area tasked with the supply.

Three men carrying spinach, papayas and oranges are allowed to leave the market and distribute it in adjoining areas — but not in the colony under strict lockdown. "We have been making trips in and out of the market," says Ramesh, a grocery supplier.

Around noon, the policemen break for lunch. Sharing food with a beggar, a constable says, "We won't allow anyone to enter, but there are people who break the rules. Padhe likhe logon ko samjhana mushkil hai."

SISODIA HINTS AT LONGER LOCKDOWN

23 Delhi areas sealed, CM rolls out measures to contain virus spread

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

DELHI CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal Thursday said the government has started 'Operation Shield' in 23 containment zones in the city to minimise chances of COVID-19 spread. The main components of this, he said, are sealing specific areas; making sure people there remain at home; isolating contacts of people who have tested positive and tracing their contacts; making sure there is door-to-door delivery of essential services; local sanitisation and disinfection; and door-to-door checking for COVID-19 symptoms.

Containment zones are under a stricter lockdown and residents of these areas are not allowed to step out of their homes even to get essentials. While 22 areas were declared as containment zones on Wednesday, Sadar Bazar was included in the list on Thursday. According to officials, cases of local transmission have been reported from the area.

Appealing to people to stay at home, Kejriwal said authorities will make sure they are provided with essentials. "We know people are facing problems during the lockdown, but we are doing this to protect you. In the US, 2,000 people have died in 24 hours. What will happen if the disease spreads uncontrollably in India? How will we control the situation then? The idea behind containment zones is to stop the spread. No one should enter these zones and no one should get out."

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia also told reporters that a decision on extending the lockdown has not been taken: "It is tough to say what the situation will be in the coming week. It

OPERATION 'SHIELD'



CM Kejriwal at Thursday's press briefing. ANI

THE CONTAINMENT EXERCISE WILL INCLUDE:

- Sealing of the area and surroundings
- Home quarantine of people living in the area
- Isolation and tracing for first and second contacts of people who have tested positive
- Essential supplies delivered from door to door
- Local sanitisation and disinfection exercise
- Door to door checks in houses in the affected area to check for people who are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, cough and bodyache

might have to be extended. It will depend on the decision taken by the Prime Minister and Chief Minister in public interest."

Kejriwal also said that while advisories initially said only those people who are infected need to wear masks, this view has changed over the past three-four weeks. "There is a lot we still don't know about the disease. Till three-four weeks ago, there was a view that only infected people need to wear masks. That view has now changed and it seems that the spread can be controlled if everyone wears masks. We are also learning from the experience of others. In Delhi, we have made it manda-

tory to wear masks. You don't need to buy them. You can also make them from a handkerchief or a piece of cloth. It should cover your nose and mouth," he said.

The CM also said with the country in lockdown and most businesses shut, government tax collection has dipped massively. "The inflow of tax is nearly zero. The government has to pay salaries to its employees. It has been decided that all government expenditure over the next few days will be stopped. The government will spend only on salaries and coronavirus-related activity such as ration distribution," he said.

At Noida and Ghaziabad hotspots, some teething trouble on Day 1

AMIL BHATNAGAR NOIDA, APRIL 9

OVER 1,000 police officers, working with officials from the district administration and state health department, ensured that 22 hotspots in Gautam Budh Nagar and 13 in Ghaziabad were sealed in a day's time on Thursday.

On day 1, however, some complaints about lack of supply and non-functional helpline numbers came in, even as the administration requested cooperation. "We have allowed the supply of milk and groceries through online and door to door delivery

in the entire district. Vegetables and fruit stalls are present at the gate of hotspots. Administration, police and authorities shall enable all suppliers, including Big Basket, Grofers, etc, to make deliveries. We are trying to minimise inconvenience," said Suhans Ly, the Gautam Budh Nagar district magistrate.

While the administration released a list of fruit and vegetable suppliers for each of the 22 hotspots, along with their phone numbers for home delivery, people said many remained unreachable. Officials have allowed milk supply at the gate, and residents can collect it from outside their

houses.

"The numbers are not reachable since morning. It needs to be addressed. Also, local vendors have increased prices. We understand this is an unprecedented task for the administration and we are trying to help ourselves as well," said K K Sharma, secretary of a housing society in Sector 74.

In some areas, locals pooled in money to place bulk orders so grocery retailers can deliver supplies in one go.

In Ghaziabad, the administration has identified 29 doorstep delivery agents, 24 fruit and vegetable vendors, 29 milk vendors and 19 medical shops for home delivery across the 13 hotspots. "We have released a list of

numbers and four officials will be on duty in each hotspot in shifts. As per our estimate, there are approximately 70,000 people in the hotspots. In Murad Nagar hotspot, there have been around 20 positive patients while in others, there has been at least one case. Officials carried out contact tracing and hotspots were identified. Essential items will be supplied door to door," said Ajay Shankar Pandey, DM, Ghaziabad.

In both districts, fire and health officials carried out extensive sanitisation through chemical spraying and cleaning. At least two constables have been placed at colony gates in the hotspots and SHO's of local police stations are making regular rounds.

Capital sees 51 new cases and three deaths, including 2 from Old Delhi

ASTHA SAXENA NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

DELHI SAW 51 new cases of coronavirus and three more deaths on Thursday, taking the toll in the capital to 12. Of the 51 people who tested positive Thursday, 35 either have a travel history or came in contact with someone who had earlier tested positive. Four people from Nizamuddin Markaz were among those who tested positive. Three cancer patients at the Delhi State Cancer Institute also tested positive for COVID-

CORONA COUNT DELHI NCR

864 12 CASES DEATHS

57 RECOVERED

positive.

Five people were meanwhile discharged from hospitals after recovering from the disease.

So far, 720 people in the capital have tested positive for the virus.

Of the three deaths reported on Thursday, two are from old Delhi, and one from east Delhi. Among the dead, is a 65-year-old woman from Darya Ganj, a 62-year-old man from Farsh Thana, and a 47-year-old man

from Laxmi Nagar. While the first two were admitted to RML hospital, the third patient was admitted to Apollo.

The woman from Darya Ganj had a history of hypertension, officials said. She developed a fever on April 2 and was admitted to RML on April 3 with breathlessness. According to officials, so far it appears she has no travel history or local transmission. She died on April 4.

The male from Farsh Thana was admitted to RML hospital with body ache but without fever. He had high blood sugar, officials said. He died on April 7. "While tracing his history, we found that he went to a nearby masjid for namaz on January 20. We are investigating more," said a senior official from the health department.

At Apollo, the 47-year-old was admitted for angiography and developed fever and cough. He underwent dialysis on April 4. "His son had travelled to Indonesia and he returned on February 28. His family members are being tracked now," said the official.

A total of 1,237 people are undergoing treatment in several hospitals in Delhi, out of which 682 have been tested positive so far. Among them, 39 patients are admitted to the ICU and 11 are on ventilator support. At Sir Ganga Ram hospital, out of 114 healthcare workers who have been quarantined, two have tested positive so far. According to the hospital administration, they are not showing signs of illness and are stable.

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
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INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Starting Date for Downloading Bid	Earnest Money	Deadline for Submission of Bid	Time Limit
1.	C/O 50.00m span bridge over Balwa Khad on Chakban Lapana via Pandhu Balwa road at RD/0479 under SOSP (SH: C/O Sub Structure, C/O super structure & C/O both side approaches).	50,00,000/-	06.05.2020	82,500/-	21.05.2020	One Year
2.	C/O 40.00m span PSC Box Girder Bridge over Manooi Khad along with approaches at RD. 0295 on Kohala to Mandhal Sunehar Tikka Badwal road SH: C/O Sub Structure, C/O super structure & C/O both side approaches).	1,15,00,850/-	06.05.2020	1,47,500/-	21.05.2020	One Year

0048/HP --HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPARK--

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eProcurement Portal: <https://cproc.cgstate.gov.in>
CORRIGENDUM NO.1& 2

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, (SECOND- CALL) NIT No.29/SAC/2019-20, Dated: 16.03.2020, System No.62142, G. No.-78020 Dt. 17-03-2020 & NIT No. 30/SAC/2019-20, Dated: 16-03-2020, System No. 62143, G. No.-78021 Dt. 17-03-2020 (FIRST-CALL) in the aforesaid tenders the amendment is done in the earlier circulated date as follows-

S. No.	Particulars	NIT No.	Previous Published	Read as
1.	Bid Start date & time The date and time from which bidders start preparation /submission of their bid response, before this bidder's action will not be allowed.)	27 & 28	13-03-2020 (17.31)	13-03-2020 (17.31)
		29 & 30	23-03-2020 (17.31)	23-03-2020 (17.31)
2.	Bid Due date & time (The last date & time for submission of bid response, after which no bids can be submitted.)	07-04-2020	(17.30)	22.04-2020 (17.30)
3.	Bid Open, Start date & time (The date of opening of Envelope- A & B online)	08-04-2020	(11.30)	23.04-2020 (11.30)

All other Terms and Conditions of NIT will remain unchanged. sd/- Executive Engineer Hasdeo Canal W/M Division Janjgir-Champa 80028

GOVT. OF JAMMU & KASHMIR DEPARTMENT OF MATERIALS MANAGEMENT (PURCHASE-2ND) SHER-I-KASHMIR INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, SOURA (SGR)
NIT No. SIMS 07 (P-II) of 2020 Dated: 07.03.2020
Sub: Abbreviated notice inviting e-tenders for outsourcing of Sanitation Services at SKIMS, Soura, Srinagar.

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor UT of Jammu & Kashmir, through Director, Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, Soura, Srinagar, e-tenders are invited under Two Bid System from registered agencies with good track record, Manpower capacity and relevant experience of Three Years or more towards providing Sanitation services in any Govt./ Semi Govt. Department/ Institution/ Reputed Public/ Private Organizations, for a period of Two Years, as per the scope of work mentioned in the detailed NIT.

The detailed tender document containing scope of work and other terms & conditions is available on www.jktenders.gov.in and complete bidding process will be online on said e-tender portal, as per following schedule:

Sr. No.	Description	Schedule
01.	Tender Fee	Rs. 2,000/-
02.	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Rs. 5.00 Lakh
03.	Date & Time for Downloading of tenders	From 09.04.2020 to 06.05.2020 upto 4.00 P.M.
04.	Date & Time for Submission of Online tender	From 23.04.2020 to 06.05.2020 upto 4.00 P.M.
05.	Date & Time for Opening of Technical Bids	09.05.2020 at 2.00 P.M.

Any clarification will be entertained from 09.04.2020 to 22.04.2020 on all working days during office hours. No representation shall be entertained beyond the stipulated period. The tender notice is also available on SKIMS website: www.skims.ac.in (for reference only). Complete bidding process will be online at www.jktenders.gov.in. Technical and Price bids shall have to be submitted in electronic format on the said tender portal and in no case be submitted in physical form, unless demanded by SKIMS.

Director SKIMS reserves the right to accept/reject or cancel any tender or all tenders in full or part thereof without assigning any reason.

The tenders should be submitted strictly in accordance with the provisions of the detailed e-NIT.

No. SIMS 325 31/2019-828-37-4465-4468 Dated: 09.04.2020 sd/- Astit. Materials Management Officer, (Purchase-2nd)

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-2020-21-12 Sr. ADEN (HQ-II)/JP Sub division-Dewatering of natural or accumulated water of various RUST's in JP-CKS Section. Approx. Cost of work: 3578285/- Earnest money Rs.: 71600/- 1. Other terms & condition will be shown on N.W.Rly. website www.iregs.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 F&CAO, NWR, Jaipur, other wise tender will not be considered. 3. Detail is available on N.W.Ry website www.iregs.gov.in and Notice Board in W.A section, DRM Office, NWR/Jaipur. 4. Tender No. ENGG-JP-2020-21-12 is to be closed on 01.05.20 at 15.30 hrs. and opened on 01.05.20 at 16.00 hrs.

Contact help line no. 139 for general complaints 382-VM/20

U.P. Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Ltd. Anpara Thermal Power Project, Anpara E-Tender Notice
1. Corrigendum: Date of opening of part-I of e-tender Notice No. 04/CHD-II/BTPS/ 2019/ 20 is further extended for participating more bidders in the e-tender. Consequence upon the issuance of this corrigendum, the date of opening of this tender is extended and is rescheduled to be opened its bid part-I on 21.04.2020 at 16.00 Hrs. in place of 09.04.2020 at 16.00 Hrs. All contents of tender specifications will remain unaltered. other details information is available at website at <http://etender.up.nic.in>. पत्रांक: 650/मु.अभि./कार्य/अता/1बी-8, दिनांक: 09/04/2020

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED
General public is hereby informed that one person namely Sunil Kumar S/o Shiv Ram R/o H.N. 658 Near Bada Shiv Mandir, Gali No. 04 Alipur, Delhi, has been missing/kidnapped from the area of P.S. Alipur, Delhi Since 04.03.2020. In this regard, a vide DD No. 31A, dated 05.03.2020 has been registered at P.S. Alipur, Delhi. The description of the missing person is as under.

Age: 21 Years, Complexion: Fair, Height: 5' 9", Face: Long, Wearing: Blue Colour Shirt, Black Colour Jacket & pant and sports shoes in feet. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out him but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing person then please inform P.S. Alipur, Delhi at following Tel No. / e-mail: c/c@cbl.gov.in and Website: <http://cbl.nic.in>

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641 Sd/- S.H.O., P.S. Alipur, Delhi Fax No. 011-24368639 Ph: 011-27202290, 27708815 Mobile : 7065036325 DP/142/ON/2020

Waqf Board allots space for corona graveyard

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

CITING DIFFICULTIES in performing the last rites of coronavirus victims, the Delhi Waqf Board has designated a graveyard in the city to bury those who succumb to the disease. The graveyard is located near the Millennium Park on Ring Road. Waqf Board CEO S M Ali wrote to the Delhi Health Department and Delhi Police

Thursday conveying the decision, following which the Revenue Department cleared it. "As you are aware we are facing a hard time due to the spread of COVID-19 and there are so many difficulties emerging on a daily basis. One of the major problems faced by the public relates to the last rites of coronavirus victims. It has been reported that due to the lack of information, the general public is not allowing burials in graveyards of Delhi," Ali wrote to the department.

FIR against officials of Agrasen hospital

New Delhi: Delhi Police has registered a case against officials of Maharaja Agrasen Hospital for alleged negligence and mismanagement, claiming that they failed to inform authorities after the death of a coronavirus patient, and returned the body to the family, DCP (West) Deepak Purohit said. The family of the deceased also did not inform anyone before conducting the last rites. Later, his son tested positive for coronavirus. A senior doctor from the hospital denied the allegations. ENS

5 THE OUTBREAK NATION

ICMR framing protocol for plasma therapy

Centre announces Rs 15,000-cr package for COVID-19 fight

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

THE INDIAN Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is framing a protocol for infusing blood plasma from people who have recovered from COVID-19 into patients in a serious condition. The procedure, known as convalescent plasma therapy, is carried out in the expectation that antibodies specific to the novel coronavirus that are present in the blood of the patient who has recovered will help generate immune response in the other patient.

This will only be done by way of a clinical trial in patients in a severe condition or on ventilator support, ICMR officials clarified. "We are in the final stages of making a protocol for convalescent plasma therapy and after that we will need approval from the Drug Controller General of India... It will be done on a trial basis. Abroad, it has been found successful in limited trials. Here we will do it only on patients on ventilator or severe patients," Dr Manoj Murhekar, Director, ICMR-National Institute of Epidemiology, said in reply to a question about Kerala being al-

lowed to go ahead with the trials. The testing strategy was revised to include antibody tests in hotspots after seven days of illness. Before that, the nucleic acid-based test will have to be done.

The government has announced a Rs 15,000-crore package that was promised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address to the nation on March 24. While Rs 7,774 crore will be utilised for emergency response and the rest for medium-term support to be provided under mission mode approach.

The Health Ministry has asked states not to procure masks, PPEs and ventilators on their own. The items, the ministry said, would be procured and distributed centrally based on a "rational" demand of states. "Certain states have been found to be holding sufficient stocks of material with them but the field functionaries have been reported to be functioning without such equipment. The state governments should ensure timely distribution of the key equipment to field functionaries," the letter from the ministry states.

Murhekar said the positivity rate of the 1.30 lakh samples tested so far is in the range of 3-

5 per cent and the number has not changed significantly in the last 1-1.5 months. Joint Secretary in Health Ministry Lav Agarwal said supplies of PPEs, masks and ventilators have started coming. "More important than the question of whether these things are sufficient or insufficient is the point of judicious use," he said.

Convalescent plasma therapy, which was recently allowed by USFDA for investigational purposes, banks on the age-old concept of passive immunity. This is one of several therapeutic options being tried against COVID-19 the world over.

In Kerala, Dr Anoop Kumar, member of the state-constituted expert committee for advising the government on COVID-19, said he had spoken to some who had recovered from COVID-19 and they are ready to be part of the plasma therapy trial. A key challenge, he said, is the non-availability of the kit for checking the antibody level in the plasma of a recovered person. That kit is not available in India and has to be brought from Germany and the cancellation of international flights would lead to delay, he said.

—WITHENS,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

RANDOM TESTING

Big spike in corona cases among SARI patients, shows ICMR research

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

THE PERCENTAGE of random positive samples of COVID-19 among severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) patients across the country has increased incrementally over the past month, new ICMR research says.

Out of 5,911 SARI patients randomly tested for COVID-19 from February 15 to April 2, a total of 104 (1.8 per cent) tested positive for COVID-19 across 52 districts in 20 states and UTs.

Forty of these cases in 15 states and 36 districts had no history of contact with a known case or any international travel. "These districts need to be prioritized to target COVID-19 containment activities," the research states.

Only two positive cases had contact history and one had international travel history; 59 had no available data, the research states. The positive cases were found disproportionately in men

and those over 50 years.

ICMR officials have said random surveillance can determine if India's outbreak has entered community transmission.

States with a high proportion of positive samples out of their total SARI samples were Delhi (5.1%), Telangana (4.2%), Maharashtra (3.8%) and Andhra Pradesh (3.1%) - states with some of the highest confirmed positive cases overall.

Maharashtra also saw a widespread of random positive cases in eight of its 36 districts, the researchers found.

West Bengal has a low number of reported cases overall, but a high number of randomly positive cases (3.5%). Uttar Pradesh had a random positive rate of 1.4%, and Madhya Pradesh had 2 per cent, according to the research.

States with a large number of confirmed cases but not many randomly positive cases are Kerala (0.2%), Tamil Nadu (0.9%), and Rajasthan (0).

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Wearing masks in public

Many states and cities across the country have made wearing face mask compulsory. What they say:

MADHYA PRADESH:

Madhya Pradesh has made wearing masks compulsory. Triple-layer masks available in the market or home-made masks with three layers can be used. Not wearing it will be treated as a violation of the State Epidemic Diseases Act and Madhya Pradesh Public Health Act, 1949.

ODISHA:

Odisha Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy on Thursday said the state government has decided to penalise people not wearing a mask in public, across the state. "From today, it is an offence to not wear a mask in public. For the first three violations, the fine will be Rs 200 each time, and in the fourth instance and beyond the penalty will be Rs 500 for every instance".

RAJASTHAN:

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has made it mandatory for citizens to wear a mask in all urban areas. Violators will be penalised under section 188 of IPC. All will have to compulsorily wear a three-ply mask or a reusable cloth mask, even while in their vehicles.

MUMBAI:

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has made it mandatory for citizens to wear masks in public places and while travelling in vehicles. The civic body said these masks may be standard masks available with the chemist or home-made, washable masks. Violators will be punished under Section 188 of IPC, which deals with disobedience to order promulgated by a public

servant.

DELHI: The government has made wearing masks mandatory for anyone stepping out of their house. Masks made out of a handkerchief or a piece of cloth, which cover the nose and mouth, are acceptable. Those in their official or personal vehicle also have to follow the order. Violators will be booked under Section 188.

UTTAR PRADESH:

Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Kumar Awasthi said anyone stepping out of their home will have to wear a mask. Principal Secretary Amit Mohan Prasad had said that in case a person does not have a mask, they can use a scarf, towel, handkerchief or stoll to cover the face. The state has not specified penalty for violation.

CHANDIGARH: Any person found not wearing a mask in public in the city will be arrested under Section 188. Union Territory Adviser Manoj Parida issued these orders under Section 22 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

SURAT: Surat Municipal Corporation has made wearing of masks compulsory, imposing a fine of Rs 100 for flouting the rule. Since Wednesday, 270 people have been fined for not wearing masks. The notification issued by SMC says, "... it is compulsory to wear home-made/non-woolen masks and maintain social distancing".



A sanitisation tunnel at Kalupur railway station in Ahmedabad. Javed Raja

GOA

Cruise ship barred from docking

Panaji: A cruise liner from Mauritius, reportedly carrying several Goa residents along with other Indians, was barred from docking at Mormugao port on Thursday. Port Minister Michael Lobo said the passengers can't be allowed to disembark due to the lockdown. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said MHA would be consulted. ENS

MANIPUR

Team that treated patient to get reward

Imphal: Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Thursday announced a reward of Rs 35 lakh for the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences team which successfully treated the state's first COVID-19 patient. The Chief Minister said that those who are on the frontlines, including the police and government functionaries, will also be rewarded. The state's first patient was a 23-year-old woman from Imphal West district. ENS

RAJASTHAN

Displaced families from Pak to get aid

Jaipur: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot Thursday announced that the state would provide rations to displaced families from Pakistan residing in the state. Gehlot took the decision following a letter from a displaced persons organisation, which claimed 6,000 such families are residing in the state and many of these them are facing shortage of rations due to the lockdown. ENS



TESTING DHARAVI

Two medical personnel gear up with personal protective equipment before testing residents of Mumbai's Dharavi — Asia's largest slum — for coronavirus. On Thursday, a 76-year-old woman who had tested positive for the virus died — the third COVID-19-related death from the area. Prashant Nadkar

FCI asked to give subsidised rice, wheat

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

WITH THE lockdown likely to be extended, the government Thursday asked the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to provide wheat at Rs 21 per kg and rice at Rs 22 per kg to the states for all beneficiaries not covered under National Food Security Act (NFSA), to whom ration cards have been

issued by state governments under their schemes.

Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Ram Vilas Paswan tweeted, "...Ration card holders under State's schemes, who do not come under NFSA, can also get foodgrains for next 3 months at a subsidised rate... the Central Government has reduced prescribed rates for direct purchase under OMSS for 3 months. Now

State Governments can directly buy rice from FCI at Rs 22/kg and wheat Rs 21/kg."

While the Centre has reduced Open Market Sale Scheme rates for voluntary organisations and state governments that want to buy foodgrain from FCI to distribute among ration cardholders, the rates will remain unchanged for other buyers. At present, the OMSS rate of wheat is Rs 21.35 per kg and rice Rs 22.50 per kg.

'We have to wait for two more weeks to see if the curve has flattened'

PROFESSOR K SRINATH REDDY, president of Public Health Foundation of India and a member of the high-level committee of public health experts for COVID-19 speaks to KAUNAIN SHERIFF M on the fight against the pandemic. Excerpts:

On March 30, India reported 1,251 COVID-19 cases and 32 deaths. In less than a week, it has witnessed an over 200 per cent spike. Keeping the lockdown and the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in mind, has India's COVID-19 curve peaked?

The rise in numbers has to be interpreted in the context of the number of types of tests performed at different periods. They have to be comparable during the two periods. We have to wait for two more weeks to see if the rising curve has flattened or is moving down. In this large country, we will need state-wise or preferably district-wise assessments. I will look at the number of new cases per day as a fraction of the number of lab and clinical assessments performed that day, using



both rural and urban samples. The immediate impact of the lockdown can be gauged over the next two weeks but the effort to quell the epidemic has to go on longer. It is only by June that we will get a measure of our success.

Virologists say it is the virus that determines the timeline, not us. However, most of the discourse around the pandemic is how long is the long haul.

The virus cannot be left to determine the timeline at its own pace. We have to do our best to slow down the transmission. The signals that we are gaining control over the virus will come when the numbers of new cases, identified through a combination of testing and clinical criteria, consistently fall over 14 days...

Out of 700 districts, over 500 are almost corona-free. How do we keep increasing this? And, in your view, what has the lockdown achieved?

The lockdown has achieved the slowing down of transmission, even though it may not

have fully stopped it. It has given time to prepare health and social systems for the delivery of essential services... We have also identified good models from different states and districts... Adapting to local conditions and trends to make data-driven decisions, we can move all districts to the corona-free category.

If you have to advise the government on the next step, what would it be?

We have to find a path that helps us meet our priorities of public health protection, economic stability and social development. Foremost priority now is to prevent the epidemic from claiming many lives. At the same time we need to ensure that the economy does not grind to a halt... Hot zones should be sealed off but strongly supported, warm zones should have intense surveillance and unaffected zones should start functioning near normally under watch... Mass gatherings of any kind should be prohibited for a year...

FULL INTERVIEW ON
www.indianexpress.com

ROPEWAYS AND RAPID TRANSPORT SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION H.P. LIMITED (RTDC)

On behalf of
SHIMLA SMART CITY LIMITED (SSCL)
Invites
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

For Engineering, Manufacturing / Procurement, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Lifts & Travelators from Lakkhar Bazar Bus stand to Ridge in Shimla under Smart City Area Based Development including comprehensive operation & maintenance for 5 years on Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC) Basis

Government of Himachal Pradesh is committed to make endeavors for the improvement of physical infrastructure in the State by creating and enhancing more transport facilities for the general public & tourists. After successful bidding of many projects, Government of Himachal Pradesh through Ropeways and Rapid Transport System Development Corporation H.P. Limited (RTDC) proposes to design, manufacture/ procure, install, test and commission Lifts & Travelators from Lakkhar Bazar Bus stand to Ridge in Shimla, including comprehensive operation & maintenance for 5 years on Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC) Basis:

Sr. No.	Project	Location	Estimated Project Cost including 0 & M Cost
1.	Engineering, Manufacturing Procurement, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Lifts & Travelators from Lakkhar Bazar Bus stand to Ridge in Shimla	Lakkhar Bazar Bus stand to Ridge, Shimla	Rs. 10.37 Crore

Image for Illustration purpose only

For further details i.e. detailed scope of work, minimum eligibility criteria, bidding procedure and other terms and conditions, please refer to the detailed RFP documents hosted [by 09.04.2020] on our website www.himachal.nic.in/transport or contact at the address given below. The interested bidders are invited to attend the pre bid meeting which shall be held on 28.04.2020 at 1500 hrs at RTDC office, US Club, Shimla. For further updates, please visit website periodically.

For further information, please contact.

ATTN OF:	The Chief General Manager Ropeways and Rapid Transport System Development Corporation HP Limited (RTDC), US Club, Shimla
ADDRESS	US Club, Shimla-171001
PHONE NO.:	+91-9418481177; +91-9418457129
E-mail ID:	cgmrtcdhd@gmail.com

LAST DATE OF RECEIPT OF PROPOSAL IS ON/BEFORE 13.05.2020 (UPTO 1200 HRS)



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



BACK IN THE GAME

SAM PITRODA, who had courted controversy during the Lok Sabha election campaign with remarks such as "hua toh hua" in the context of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, is back. Pitroda, who is considered close to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, held a video conference with health ministers of the four Congress-ruled states on Wednesday on the COVID-19 issue. They were joined by some doctors and public policy experts besides party leaders such as Shashi Tharoor, Manish Tewari and K Raju, who works in Rahul's office. Now some Congress leaders are wondering whether the initiative was at the behest of Rahul or Congress president Sonia Gandhi, or was Pitroda's own idea. And they are wondering since when has Pitroda been given the task of coordinating the efforts for Congress-ruled states.

MASS MASKS

WEARING OF masks is increasingly becoming compulsory in states. HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal, an MP from Haridwar, is now distributing masks made of khadi in Delhi and his constituency. These khadi masks are being made by an organisation run by the minister's daughter Arushi Nishank. The masks are being pitched as reusable as well as environment-friendly, as it takes only 1 litre of water to make a metre of khadi, as opposed to 56 litres of water for mill fabric.

USE TIME BETTER

RAILWAYS MINISTER Piyush Goyal took a dig at the top officers of the national transporter, saying the senior management is not using the lockdown period, when passenger train operations are suspended, as an opportunity to do the kind of long-term planning that they did not get the scope to do all these years. He is learnt to have mentioned planning items such as making 'zero based' time-table, reduction of turnaround time of each train in maintenance, etc, as issues that the senior management could put their minds to now, and be management by exception.

Maundy Thursday: Mass livestreamed in Kerala

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 9

CHURCHES REMAINED shut for the public in Kerala during Maundy Thursday as the Christian community watched the day's mass on social media livestreams and television channels.

Maundy Thursday marks the beginning of the holy week leading up to Easter Sunday.

Churches in the state had decided not to open during the lockdown after the government insisted on social distancing to tackle the COVID-19 spread. However, priests conducted the daily mass in the presence of a few assistants and altar servers.

Eight more test positive in Chhattisgarh

GARGI VERMA RAIPUR, APRIL 9

DAYS AFTER a 16-year-old boy in Katghora town in Chhattisgarh's Korba district tested positive for the coronavirus, eight more people from the area tested positive. The state government has sealed the area and is going to test all the residents of the area, sources said. "All the eight patients lived in a community... These people interacted with the boy who was tested earlier..." said a senior police officer from Korba. Bilaspur range IG Dipanshu Kabra said, "The people found positive today are residents of Chhattisgarh who came in contact with some people who had come from Kamptee. We have already registered an FIR against the people from Kamptee as they had hidden their travel histories." Neighbouring district Sarguja has also shut the inter-district border to ensure containment.

With the new cases, the state's tally for coronavirus patients has reached 18, of whom nine have been discharged. All the nine active patients are currently admitted in AIIMS Raipur.

Wadhawans breach lockdown orders, detained

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE MUMBAI, PUNE, APRIL 9

DHFL PROMOTERS Kapil Wadhawan and Dheeraj Wadhawan, who are facing money laundering charges in the Yes Bank case and are currently out in bail, were on Thursday detained at Mahabaleshwar in Satara along with 21 others for violating lockdown orders. All were shifted to a school-turned quarantine facility in Panchgani, where they will be under observation for the next 14 days, said police.

Earlier in the day, BJP leader Kirit Somaiya alleged that members of the Wadhawan family were granted a special pass by the Maharashtra government to travel during the lockdown and called for an inquiry into the incident.

The letter granting permission for Dheeraj Wadhawan, Kapil Wadhawan and others, who were to travel in five cars, was granted by Principal Secretary (Home) Amitabh Gupta on April 8. Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said the government will probe the matter.

Pvt labs endorse SC order on free tests, want to know: Who will cover cost?

KAUNAIN SHERIFFM & PRABHA RAGHAVAN NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

A DAY after they were ordered by the Supreme Court to provide COVID-19 testing free of cost, private labs have called upon the government to "come up with modalities" so that their service "remains sustainable".

Some of the leading groups, such as Dr Dangs Lab and Dr Lal PathLabs, told *The Indian Express* that while they "endorse" and "will abide by the Supreme Court order", testing involves "fixed costs", such as reagents and consumables. And in the case of COVID-19, they say, the labs have to incur the cost of providing personal protective equipment to their staff, too.

At least one approved lab,

Mumbai-headquartered Thyrocare, has decided to put on hold its COVID-19 testing until it receives further clarity on the situation. The firm said it had so far collected 2,000 samples.

The Centre had fixed a price cap of Rs 4,500 on each test for the 65 private labs in 12 states that were approved. Among the states, Maharashtra (14), Telangana (10) and Tamil Nadu (9) have the largest network of private labs conducting these tests.

"For private labs, there are numerous fixed costs, such as reagents, consumables, skilled manpower and infrastructure specific. The COVID-19 pandemic also calls for immense infection-control measures, like personal protective equipment, viral transport media, and the need to keep sanitation and employee safety in mind at every step. Private labs are

barely able to recover costs at the govt-mandated cost of Rs 4,500," said Dr Arjun Dang, CEO, Dr Dangs Lab. "We hope the government comes up with modalities so that testing in private laboratories remains sustainable," he said.

Dr Arvind Lal, Managing Director, Dr Lal PathLabs, said they "are talking to the government... We want to find a solution... The government had approved this price, and now we are in discussion with the government again," he said.

Lal had earlier termed the Rs 4,500 cost as a "next to" breakeven price for the company. "The costs are multifold. It is just not about the kit," he had said.

Thyrocare CEO Arokiaswamy Velumani said: "The government should tell us not to charge, and we will not charge... We have paused our ac-

tivity, because why should we unnecessarily get into distress? We are awaiting (clarity)."

Velumani said the labs, too, "want the common man to get the tests for free", and suggested a way forward. "For all those who are employed, the employers should pay. For those unemployed, the government should pay," he said.

While the Centre is yet to respond, the methodology adopted by other countries in this direction is significant.

For instance, South Korea has opted for an aggressive testing policy — once approved by a doctor, it's free for anyone who has returned from China, or had contact either with an infected person or those in high-risk groups.

The US model adopts different strategies for different categories. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act, approved on March

19, mandates Medicare, Medicare Advantage and Medicaid coverage for COVID-19 testing. This is similar to coverage under the Ayushman Bharat scheme, now being offered by the central government.

The US government has also asked private insurance firms to provide coverage for tests — but only those conducted with kits that have received "emergency use authorisation" by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The US has also increased funding for Medicaid, and allowed states to cover free testing for uninsured residents under the programme, as a temporary measure. For those not covered under insurance or government programmes, the US has set aside \$1 billion for the National Disaster Medical System to reimburse the costs of testing and diagnosis.

Indore records a first, doctor dies of COVID-19

MILIND GHATWAI BHOPAL, APRIL 9

A 62-YEAR-OLD medical practitioner died of coronavirus in Indore on Thursday, taking to 22 the death toll in the biggest city in Madhya Pradesh, officials said. The state's death toll is now 33, with eight deaths reported in the last 24 hours, according to state officials.

The Indore physician's death is perhaps the first instance of a medical practitioner succumbing to the virus. The private practitioner was not involved in treating COVID patients but may have contracted it from one of his patients because he continued to work, even as many other practitioners stopped practicing days ago, officials said.

Indore CMHO Dr Pravin Jadia told *The Indian Express* that the doctor was diabetic and suffered from hypertension. He was admitted to a hospital on April 5 after he complained of breathlessness.

He tested positive on Wednesday and died around 3.45 am on Thursday, Dr Jadia said.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and his predecessor Kamal Nath paid tributes to the deceased medical practitioner.

Officials on Thursday said the virus has spread to five more districts of MP — Hoshangabad, Raisen, Dhar, Khandwa and Dewas. With this, 18 districts of the state have so far reported confirmed coronavirus cases. By 4 pm on Thursday, the state reported 411 cases.

Health Commissioner Faiz Ahmed Kidwai said more cases were being reported because the number of tests have gone up. He said the state is conducting more than 1,000 tests per day. Indore has so far reported 211 confirmed cases, followed by Bhopal with 98 cases.

First death in Jharkhand

Ranchi: Jharkhand saw its first COVID-19 death in Bokaro Thursday after a 75-year-old man who had complained of "breathlessness" died in Bokaro general hospital. The district administration said the patient was admitted on April 4 and had "pneumonia and breathlessness".



UP IN ARMS Lucknow civic body's cleaning staff protest, demanding protective equipment. Vishal Srivastav

2G SPEED MAKES ONLINE CLASSES A STRUGGLE Private DTH operators told to air govt education channels in J&K

RITIKA CHOPRA NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

THE GOVERNMENT has asked private DTH operators to telecast at least one SWAYAM PRABHA channel covering higher education after centrally-run educational institutions in Jammu & Kashmir flagged problems in shifting classes online because of restrictions on internet speed.

Since March 4, only 2G mobile services with no restriction on websites have been allowed in J&K.

The National Institute of Technology (NIT) in Srinagar had apprised the HRD Ministry a week ago of its struggle to conduct real-

time lessons online and to even upload resource material with 2G internet. The Central University of Jammu and the Central University of Kashmir, too, are facing problems and have mostly limited themselves to sharing PDFs, Word files and PowerPoint presentations over WhatsApp and email.

"We have approached the I&B Ministry to ask private DTH providers to air at least one of our higher education channels. Everyone doesn't have DD Free Dish. (If private providers air our channel) then this should increase access and resolve the problem faced by the students," Higher Education Secretary Amit Khare said. FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

SC notice to Centre, J&K on plea against Internet curbs

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday issued notice to the Centre and Jammu and Kashmir administration on a plea against restricting mobile internet in the region to 2G speed.

Taking up the matter through video conference, a bench of Justices N V Ramana, B R Gavai and Subhash Reddy issued the notice on a plea by the Federation of Media Professionals, a non-profit organisation.

The petitioner contended that restricting access to 4G speed, especially amid the pandemic, amounts to restricting the right of the people, including doctors in J&K, to access important daily advisories and guidelines regarding the pandemic.

The court will hear the matter again next week. ENS

24 fresh cases in Valley, contacts of those who earlier tested positive

ADIL AKHZER SRINAGAR, APRIL 9

ELEVEN FAMILY members of a man from Hajin in Bandipora district, who died this week and tested positive for coronavirus, were among 24 fresh cases reported in the Valley on Thursday, officials said. Jammu and Kashmir now has 184 cases, of which 152 are from Kashmir.

Health officials said half of the cases reported Thursday were from Bandipora district alone. Kashmir has recorded 54 new cases in the last 48 hours.

J&K government spokesperson Rohit Kansal said the 24 cases were contacts of those who had earlier tested positive. He tweeted, "24 more positive in Kashmir. Total 184. 32 in Jammu, 152 in Kashmir. All are contacts. A result of aggressive testing."

Earlier this week, a 54-year-old diabetes patient from Hajin had died in a Srinagar hospital and was subsequently found positive for COVID-19.

A senior health official said, "11 family members of a person who died this week have tested positive today. They were already under quarantine when the man died because they were in close contact with him... They have been put under isolation."

Hidden away in 'Goa's Tuscany', migrants without food

SMITA NAIR ASSAGAO (GOA), APRIL 9

ASSAGAO IS known as "Goa's Tuscany", or the summer pincode for some of India's richest millionaires. It took a virus for the administration to wake up to its other residents — the service staff, including migrants, who keep this world of large hacienda villas and private pools afloat.

Raj Singh, 29, came in a group from Jharkhand to build a villa. The house is half-done, with all work at a halt. "We keep checking for trains to Jharkhand but there is little information... The contractor is supplying rations but these will stop some day."

At another end of the village, Doman Thatti, from Begusarai, says he has gone out twice looking for his contractor and the "rich man" from Karnataka who owes

him money for building his bakery. "I am told both have left."

The 35-year-old adds that he has been struggling to understand coronavirus. "Yesterday I told my wife and neighbours it's got something to do with meeting people. I don't know yet, but I promise the government that if you allow us to work at construction sites, we will not talk to anyone, keep our heads down, and work."

His neighbour Sandeep Kumar Bharti, 32, is worried about his pregnant wife Julie Devi, not knowing if and where to take her when the time comes. "We are from Uttar Pradesh. We came here as we can earn Rs 400 here per day compared to Rs 300 in our village. Someone asked us to buy soap and sanitiser. I went looking, but they cost too much."



Doman Thatti, a native of Begusarai, says he has gone out twice looking for his contractor and the "rich man" from Karnataka who owes him money for building his bakery. Express

Baghel holds Centre responsible for COVID-19 spread in country

MANOJ CG NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

AS THE number of confirmed coronavirus cases in India inched closer to 6,000, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Thursday held the Central government responsible for the spread of the disease in the country. He argued that the epidemic would not have spread had the government screened and quarantined all passengers who came from other countries early on.



Bhupesh Baghel

As for extending the lockdown, Baghel said his government will take a decision on April 12, a day after the Prime Minister's scheduled video-conference with Chief Ministers of all states.

"This disease did not originate in India. This disease came

to India through people who arrived in the country via international flights. Had all those people who landed in India — be it in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad or Chennai — been screened and quarantined early on... then this situation would not have arisen... the disease would not have spread all over India... the problems that we are facing today could have been averted... this the Central government should have done," he said at a Congress press conference.

Officials say they are aware of the situation and are in touch with panchayats and volunteer networks to ensure supplies. "We have been informed that stocks are reaching. We are making a database and understanding the scale of migrants in the state. The state registry only has 15,000 building and construction workers listed with it," an official said.

Assagoan sarpanch Hanumant Ranu Naik accuses the state government of being of no help. "Initially we arranged 520 bags of essentials, but had to distribute it first to the needy. Soon we also started including migrants. But the panchayat has seven wards and the number of calls were too many. We are making arrangements for the next round of stocks," Naik says.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Reading the containment plan

The sealing of COVID-19 hotspots is part of the government's larger plan to contain the spread. A look at the approach laid down, stage by stage, and what is recommended on hospitalisation and treatment

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

IN THE last couple of days, several areas in the National Capital Region have been cordoned off — "sealed" — to try and restrict the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) within that area. This is part of India's "containment" plan, essentially an updated version of an earlier Health Ministry blueprint that was drawn up when the only COVID-19 cases were those coming from abroad.

What are the components of the plan?

The plan outlines a strategic approach based on the stage of transmission. Five stages have been identified — travel-related case reported in India; local transmission; large outbreaks amenable to containment; widespread community transmission; India becoming endemic for COVID-19.

"At the time of writing this document, many of the crucial epidemiological information particularly source of infection, mode of transmission, period of infectivity, etc are still under investigation," reads a disclaimer. Officials say it means that the plan is subject to revisions if required, as and when there is greater clarity about some of these aspects.

What is the approach recommended for the various stages?

Containment of local transmission hinges on extensive contact tracing and search for cases in the containment zone, testing all suspect cases and high-risk contacts, and isolating all suspect or confirmed cases; quarantining contacts; and social distancing.

For larger outbreaks, in addition to the usual measures, there is higher focus on a particular geographic zone and hospitals around the area are prepared for a rise in cases. This was done in Agra in early March when the area was cordoned off, contact tracing and isolation undertaken at a large scale in Lohamandi area, and SN Hospital became the base of the surveillance team and also the place where suspected cases could be taken if required. In addition, all asymptomatic healthcare workers are to be given hydroxychloroquine as a preventive.



Barricade outside a sealed housing society in Greater Noida. *Gajendra Yadav*

The graded containment plan in effect takes lessons from the H1N1 influenza pandemic where the spread was in clusters. "The current geographic distribution of COVID-19 mimics the distribution of H1N1 Pandemic Influenza. This suggests that while the spread of COVID-19 in our population could be high, it's unlikely that it will be uniformly affecting all parts of the country. This calls for differential approach to different regions of the country, while mounting a strong containment effort in hot spots," reads the plan document.

How are confirmed and suspected cases to be dealt with?
It says: "All suspect/confirmed COVID-19 cases will be hospitalized and kept in isolation in dedicated COVID-19 hospitals/hospital blocks. Persons testing positive for COVID-19 will remain hospitalized till such time as two of their samples are tested negative as per discharge policy. About 15% of the patients are likely to require hospitalization, and an additional 5% will require ventilator management."

To reduce the burden on hospitals, there is a plan to temporarily convert hotels/ hostels/ guesthouses/stadiums near a COVID-19 hospital as care centres where mild cases may be kept. "Dedicated COVID-19 hospitals/dedicated blocks in large hospitals will be identified and operationalized. Moderate to severe cases, who require monitoring of their clinical status (patients with radiological evidence of pneumonia) will be admitted to COVID hospital." For more severe cases requiring respiratory or other support, tertiary care centres both private and government will be included as part of the micro plan.

So, the protocol varies based on severity?
Yes. The Health Ministry has issued directions for categorisation of designated facilities into three groups — COVID care centres, COVID health centres and dedicated COVID hospitals. The care centres will be for cases clinically assigned as mild or very mild, or suspected cases. The health centres are hospitals that will offer care for all cases that have been clinically assigned as moderate. The dedicated hospitals will offer comprehensive care, primarily for those clinically assigned as severe.

"The COVID care centres are makeshift facilities. These may be set up in hostels, hotels, schools, stadiums, lodges etc., both public and private. (COVID health centres) should either be a full hospital or a separate block in a hospital with preferably separate entry/ exit/

zoning.(they) will have separate areas for suspect and confirmed cases. Suspect and confirmed cases should not be allowed to mix under any circumstances," said the document on categorisation of care and hospitalisation facilities prepared by the emergency medical response division of the Health Ministry.

What is the line of treatment?

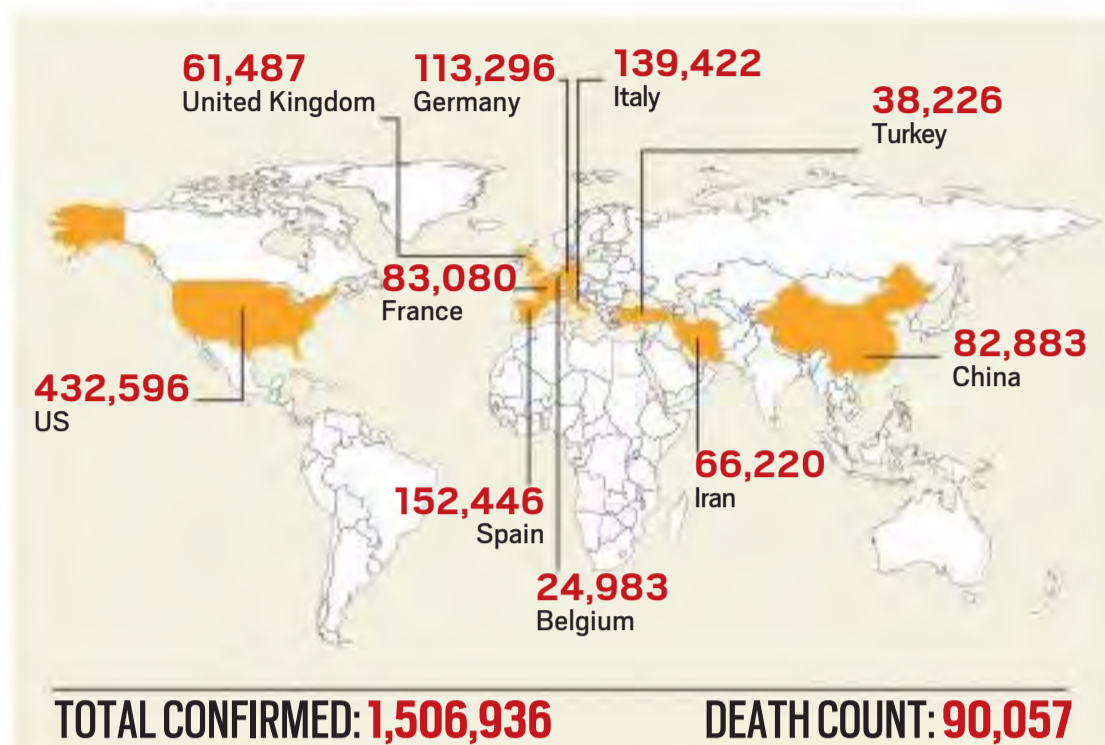
The document collates the various advisories issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), emphasising that till now there is no approved specific drug or vaccine against COVID-19.

"However Hydroxychloroquine has been recommended as chemoprophylaxis drug for use by asymptomatic healthcare workers managing COVID-19 cases and asymptomatic contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases... In addition a combination of Hydroxychloroquine and Azithromycin has been advocated for use in severe cases of COVID-19 under medical supervision," it says. On Thursday, the ICMR said it is in the final stages of preparing a clinical trial protocol for convalescent plasma therapy.

Does it address the concerns of healthcare personnel?

Amid unrest among medical personnel across the country over the availability and quality of personal protective equipment (PPE), the plan reiterates the need for adequate PPE. "At all times doctors, nurses and paramedics working in the clinical areas will wear three-layered surgical mask and gloves. The medical personnel working in isolation and critical care facilities where aerosolisation is anticipated, will wear full complement of PPE (including N95 masks). The support staff engaged in cleaning and disinfection will also wear full complement of PPE. Environmental cleaning should be done twice daily and consist of damp dusting and floor mopping with Lysol or other phenolic disinfectants and cleaning of commonly touched surfaces with sodium hypochlorite solution," says the document. Sodium hypochlorite is already being used extensively, including in the Nizamuddin headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat.

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK
YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED DAILY



Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on April 9

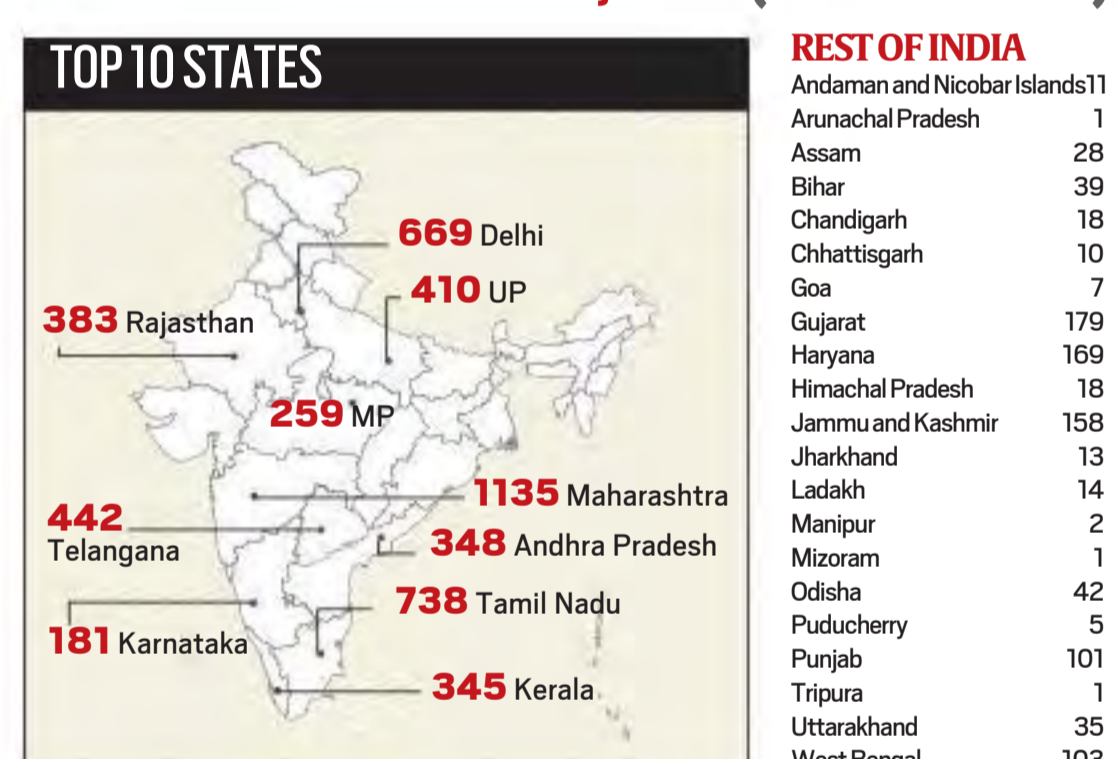
How should I clean and reuse my home-made face cover?

IN THE new conversation around masks, governments in various countries, including India and the US, have now recommended that even uninfected people cover their faces when they go out. Can you wear the same face cover again and again? You can, the Health Ministry says in an advisory, while insisting on cleaning it after each use. The advisory includes a disclaimer over the home-made face cover's limitations: "This face cover is not recommended for either health workers or those working with or in contact with COVID-19 patients or are patients themselves as these categories of people are required to wear specified protective gear."

- boil it in water for 15 minutes; or
- Wash and clean with soap and apply heat on the face cover for up to 5 minutes (you may use an iron).
- For wearing the cover, the advisory recommends:
 - Wash your hands thoroughly before wearing the face cover;
 - As soon as the face cover becomes damp or humid, switch to another one and clean the used one;
 - Never reuse a face cover after single use without cleaning it;
 - Never share it with anyone.
- For removing it:
 - Do not touch any surface of the face cover; remove it using the strings;
 - After removal, immediately clean your hands with 65% alcohol-based hand sanitiser or with soap and water for 40 seconds;
 - Drop cover into a soap solution or boiling water to which salt has been added.

The advisory recommends that the face cover, after removal, be sealed in a cleaned plastic bag.

INDIA COUNT: 5,865 (169 DEATHS)



Union Health Ministry update at 11 pm on April 9. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states with most cases are listed above. 478 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 22 STATES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

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

Direct farm-to-kitchen: relief, with promise

PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS
PUNE, APRIL 9

THE DISRUPTION in supply chains as a result of the lockdown has spotlighted the relevance of a nearly two-decade-old initiative to reach fresh produce directly to consumers in Maharashtra, bypassing the mandis. The essential features of this alternative market channel — decentralisation and direct-to-home delivery — will remain valuable even after the lockdown, when efforts to avoid crowding in the wholesale markets are likely to continue.



A decentralised market in Pune. *Express*

Alternative model

The idea is to create smaller, less congested markets in urban areas with the participation of farmers' groups and Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs), so that growers of vegetables and fruit have direct access to consumers.

Maharashtra is one of a handful of states where FPCs are robust. The model, implemented by the state Agriculture Department and Maharashtra State Agricultural Marketing Board (MSAMB), requires urban

and rural local bodies and other stakeholders to buy into the agricultural marketing chain.

How the markets work

The government and MSAMB identify farmer groups and FPCs, and form clusters; local bodies choose the market sites and link the markets for direct delivery to cooperative housing societies.

The model was introduced in the early

2000s. The FPCs and farmers' groups are allotted space for weekly markets in municipal wards or localities. Some producers' groups park pick-up trucks loaded with fruits and vegetables at the gates of housing societies. Locally produced vegetables are the bulk of the stock.

Before the lockdown began on March 24, at least 118 such markets were set up in Mumbai, Pune and Thane, with more planned in Nashik, Aurangabad and other cities.

In the time of pandemic

Traffic of both buyers and sellers in these decentralised markets can be controlled more effectively than in wholesale mandis — a key advantage when social distancing is critical. Most FPCs have minimised contact, and have taken to selling pre-packed, customised packets of vegetables.

In several areas of Pune and Mumbai, the decentralised markets have given way to FPCs delivering directly to the gates of housing societies. The administration has set up telephone numbers in each district, to which residents can call in to pre-order vegetables. The farmers' groups have filled much of the

gap created by the shuttering of wholesale markets. More than 200 FPCs are now supplying fresh vegetables in urban Maharashtra.

What's in it for farmers

The start of the pandemic coincided with the peak vegetable harvesting season. As the markets were locked down, there was a threat to the crop in over 100 lakh hectares in the country. A significant part of the produce is several states has made its way to these markets, softening the blow to farmers.

More importantly, larger numbers of vegetable growers in Maharashtra have got into direct selling to consumers. The practices of rudimentary packing, sorting and branding are being inculcated in farmers, as they pack and send pre-ordered packets to housing societies.

Direct marketing, although not a new concept in perishables, had thus far failed to get much traction among local farmers. Now, with mandis shut, rural entrepreneurs have stepped in to supply the demand in the cities. This exposure will likely help create alternative market chains that could continue even after more normal times return.

Armed forces in outbreak battle: their role, procedures for requisition

SUSHANT SINGH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

AS THE Army moves in to take over the COVID-19 quarantine facility at Narela in Delhi, the procedure for calling the armed forces to help the civil administration is in the spotlight.

What is the procedure?

The regulations permit civil authorities to requisition the Army for controlling law and order, maintaining essential services, assisting during natural calamities such as earthquakes, and any other type of help that may be needed by the civil authorities. The procedure for requisitioning armed forces is governed under 'Aid to Civil Authorities' under the guidelines laid in Instructions on Aid to the Civil Authorities by the Armed Forces, 1970; Regulations for the Army, Chapter VII, Paragraphs 301 to 327; and Manual of Indian Military Law, Chapter VII. Civil administration requests the Local Military Authority for assistance, for the maintenance of law and order, maintenance of essential services, disaster relief and other types of assistance. Armed forces can be asked to provide troops and equipment for a flag march, rescue and relief, evacuation, and immediate aid.

The current case of checking the spread



An Army personnel distributes food among the homeless and needy in Chennai, during the lockdown. *PTI*

of COVID-19 is different, as the medical aspect is predominant. These resources are being controlled centrally and judiciously, because of the requirement of doctors, equipment and facilities.

What are the tasks expected to be performed in the current situation?

Besides the specialised medical resources, which are centrally controlled, the local units are prepared for maintenance of law and order, crowd control, curfew in sensitive areas, evacuation of civilians from affected areas, provision of essential supply of electricity and

water, restoration of essential services, emergency feeding and shelter, prevention of panic, prevention of theft and loot, guarding quarantine locations and detention centres, surveillance through drones aerial platforms, and other miscellaneous tasks.

In such situations, what happens to the armed forces' primary role?

Providing aid to civil authorities, as and when called upon to do so, is a secondary task for the armed forces. It cannot replace the primary role of ensuring external security and operational preparedness. The Army recently killed five militants on the Line of Control (LoC), foiling an infiltration attempt, while losing five Special Forces soldiers in the engagement. There have been 53 ceasefire violations on the LoC which the Army has responded to. The Navy also continues to be operational on its various mission-based deployments, while taking all the precautions to prevent infection from foreign ports.

Is there a ceiling on such deployment?

No, there is no such ceiling either of duration of deployment or on the number of armed forces personnel that can be deployed to aid civil authority. The National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC), headed by the cabinet secretary, is the final authority.

Are there any templates or instances from the past that are applicable here?

The current situation is different from earlier cases such as tsunami or super-cyclone, which were natural disasters. The major difference is that specialists are the key in the current situation, and their tasks cannot be performed by general duty soldiers.

Who pays for the costs incurred by the armed forces in these roles?

The civil administration. The cost of assistance provided by the Armed Forces is recovered in accordance with the instructions contained in Appendix 'H' to the Pamphlet 'Instructions on Aid to Civil Authorities by the Armed Forces 1970'. These instructions are also contained in the ADGFP letter No 9367/Reports/GS/FP2 dated 11 Jul 1994.

What is the role of the National Disaster Management Authority?

NDMA is involved in secondary follow-ups by the Home Ministry, and is not actively involved in the current case. The roles of the Ministries of Health, Home, Civil Aviation and Defence are predominant in this case. The armed forces are aligned with them at the apex level viz NCMC. The directions are followed by execution-level coordination which is done by respective secretaries in the government.

WHAT ARMED FORCES HAVE DONE SO FAR

6 quarantine facilities in Mumbai, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Hindon, Manesar and Chennai. Over 1,700 persons have been kept at these centres so far, of whom over 400 have been released. Three positive cases were referred to a hospital.

15 other facilities on standby, capacity of approximately 7,000. The Army runs 6 (Babina, Jhansi, Barmer, Bhopal, Kolkata, Binnaguri), IAF another 6 (Bhatinda, Hyderabad, Deolali, Kanpur, Gorakhpur, Agra), the Navy 3 (Vizagapatam, Kochi, Chilkla).

51 armed forces hospitals are preparing dedicated COVID-19 facilities including High Dependency Units (scaled-down version of an Intensive Care Unit), and ICU beds.

5 testing labs at armed forces hospitals made part of national grid. These are Army Hospital (Research & Referral), Delhi Cantt; Air Force Command Hospital, Bangalore; AFMC, Pune; Command Hospital (Central Command), Lucknow; and

Command Hospital (Northern Command), Udhampur. Six more hospitals to be equipped with the resources to begin COVID-19 testing.

SPECIAL IAF flights have evacuated people and carried medical supplies. A C-17 Globemaster III has carried 15 tonnes of supplies to China and airlifted 125 persons including Indians on its return. From Iran, it brought back 58 stranded Indians. Also, C-130J Super Hercules aircraft has ferried 6.2 tonnes of medicine to Maldives. An Army Medical Corps team was deployed in Maldives between March 13-21.

60 tonnes of stores airlifted by IAF transport fleet has airlifted approximately to various parts of the country. Twenty-eight fixed wing and 21 helicopters are on standby.

6 Naval ships kept ready for assistance to neighbouring countries. Five medical teams also on standby for deployment in Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Afghanistan.



THE U.S. CONSTITUTION IS AN EXTRAORDINARY DOCUMENT. IN MY VIEW, IT SHOULD NOT BE AMENDED OFTEN. — BERNIE SANDERS

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Through the prism of crisis



CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT AND HEMAL THAKKER

By revealing magnitude of migrant worker phenomenon, COVID-19 points to rural distress

WHO IN THE MIDDLE

US-China battle over its role in pandemic may be precursor to struggle about future of UN, multilateral institutions

AS THE RECORD of the World Health Organisation in handling the coronavirus crisis becomes a bone of contention between the US and China, India should not lose sight of its significant interest in promoting long overdue change at the UN agency responsible for global public health. In his intervention at the G-20 meeting last month to coordinate global actions on the COVID-19 crisis, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for a reorientation of the WHO to make it more effective. Delhi must, however, caution the world against excessive politicisation of the debate on the WHO's role and performance in a crisis that has cost thousands of lives in China, from where the virus began to spread out, and in the rest of the world. The time for a post-mortem, Delhi should insist, begins only after the war against the virus ends.

With the US likely to become the biggest victim of coronavirus, the debate about its origin, spread and management has begun to acquire a sharp intensity in America. The number of dead in the US is now the second largest at about 15,000, behind Italy at nearly 18,000. In the next few days the count in the US might cross that of Italy. Twice in the last few days, Trump has criticised the WHO, for being too deferential to China during the crisis and underplaying the danger to the rest of the world. Trump is channeling the strong sentiment in the US that if the WHO had done its job, the world could have significantly reduced the casualties. The WHO, however, has rejected the criticism and insists that its actions have saved many lives. Beijing is standing firmly behind the UN agency. A battle royale is shaping up at the WHO between the US and China and this could well be the precursor to a broader struggle between the two for the future of the UN and other multilateral institutions.

Delhi, however, should not view the WHO's recent actions through the sole prism of US-China conflict. Many major countries, including India, were deeply wary of the WHO's policy guidance during the crisis. As this newspaper reported on Thursday, Delhi chose to rely on the Indian Council of Medical Research rather than the WHO in limiting the spread of the coronavirus. India is better off for Delhi's independent judgements. But that luxury is not available to most countries in the world, especially the developing nations that rely entirely on the WHO's wisdom. Delhi owes it to itself and its traditional constituency in the global South to help ensure that there is an objective international investigation into the WHO's performance in the war against the virus and identification of the correct lessons for dealing with future pandemics. That, in turn, should pave the way for a badly needed revitalisation of the WHO, the only collective framework the world has in dealing with challenges of global health.

LET IT FALL

RBI should let the rupee slide. It will aid export growth when global trade picks up

WITH CONTINUING UNCERTAINTY over the spread of the coronavirus and its economic impact, there has been a sell-off globally in risk assets as investors are seeking refuge in safe haven assets such as the dollar. Most emerging market currencies have fallen in this period, and while the Indian rupee has also fallen, it has fared relatively better than others. On Thursday, the rupee ended the day at 76.29 against the dollar, after touching a low of 76.54 during the day. Since March, the currency has fallen by around 5 per cent against the dollar. In comparison, over the same period, the Mexican peso has fallen by 26 per cent, the Brazilian real by 17 per cent, the Indonesian rupiah by 14 per cent, and the South African rand by 18 per cent. The Indian currency has fared relatively better despite a massive sell-off by foreign investors — FIIs have withdrawn around \$14 billion in March. This situation is in stark contrast to the 2013 period when all emerging market currencies, and the Indian rupee in particular, fell sharply on account of talks of the US Federal Reserve slowly putting the break on its quantitative easing programme.

Through this period, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been actively intervening in the currency markets. Foreign exchange reserves fell by \$10 billion in the week ended March 20 — indicating the extent of the intervention. Presumably, the intervention was aimed at slowing down the pace of the rupee's fall in order to prevent a self-fulfilling cycle. But, notwithstanding the intervention needed to iron out excess volatility, the evidence suggests that the Indian rupee continues to be overvalued and should be allowed to fall. The RBI's 36-currency export-based real effective exchange rate (REER) stood at 119.47 in February, indicating significant overvaluation. The currency's recent fall, to that extent, corrects for this overvaluation. But as the continuing overvaluation of the currency affects the country's export competitiveness, this needs to be addressed.

When the uncertainty over the economic disruption caused by the coronavirus begins to recede, and economic activity begins to crawl back in, global funds will start flowing back towards emerging markets, including India. This would exert upward pressure on the rupee. While the RBI's stated policy is that it does not target any particular level, at a time when countries will be fighting to grab export market share in order to boost growth, the central bank must ensure that the currency's value does not affect the country's export competitiveness.

A LITTLE TO THE LEFT

Bernie Sanders's legacy will be the issues he pushed front and centre in US politics

AS HE CALLED an end to his second campaign for the Democratic Party nomination for US president on April 8, Bernie Sanders asserted that "few would deny that over the course of the past five years, our movement has won the ideological struggle". A few days before Sanders's announcement, the US pharmaceutical industry was exempted from price controls in the over \$8 billion emergency spending bill proposed to deal with the coronavirus outbreak. It would be easy to see this development — seemingly opening the door to profiteering during the pandemic — as evidence of the futility of the "ideological struggle". Inequality, unaffordable healthcare and an end to corporate profits determining American policy were key planks of Sanders' campaign. But his political legacy is important not just for the outcomes, but more for how it has shifted the terms of debate in the world's richest and oldest democracy.

Already 78, this was likely Sanders's last campaign. But the causes he has espoused have galvanised young Americans and created the possibility of a new leadership on the left. Racial equality — including calling out police brutality — gender rights, affordable higher education, a better economic and social security net and healthcare are now front and centre in the US's political discourse. A new generation of leaders, who don't look or talk like the traditional suited male politician — the likes of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez — are making waves. And even the idea of the American dream is evolving for many into one that includes a basic standard of living for all.

Yet, it was not Bernie's time. Much like Jeremy Corbyn in the UK, Sanders was unable to gather the support of the centre of his own party. The rhetoric against the "one per cent" — the wealthiest — has lost out to the idea of someone who can build a consensus in Joe Biden. But Sanders has shifted the centre just a little more to the left.

THE COVID-19 CRISIS is affecting rural India at a time when agriculture is already in a precarious situation. The thousands of migrant workers who have returned to their villages since the lockdown used to send home large remittances. Tariq Thachil's field work shows that a majority of the migrant workers send 25 to 50 per cent of their monthly income to their families — which will now miss this money. In Bihar, these remittances accounted for 35.6 per cent of gross state domestic product in 2011-12, up from 11.6 per cent in 2004-05. How will the villagers of Bihar, or Orissa, for that matter, cope with this new situation?

The question is particularly relevant at a time when Indian agriculture is facing huge challenges. In fact, the migrant worker phenomenon is a symptom of these challenges, as they have moved to the city mostly because of the push factors. According to the 2011 census, 3.5 million migrants who moved within the last one year stated economic reasons for migration. The corresponding numbers for the 2001 and 1991 census, were, respectively, 2.2 and 1.4 million.

For years, rural India has been losing ground vis-a-vis towns and cities. In 2008, the "rural-urban gap" was at 45 per cent in India in terms of average revenue — versus 10 per cent for China and Indonesia. The data from the 75th round of NSSO for 2017-18 suggests that the rural-urban gap widened during 2012-18. The rural monthly per capita expenditure declined from Rs 1,430 in 2011-12 to Rs 1,304 in 2017-18 — an 8.8 per cent decline — while it rose from Rs 2,630 to Rs 3,155 in urban India — a 2.6 per cent increase. This is partly due to the slow growth of agriculture over the last decade. In 2013-2019, the average agricultural GDP growth rate was 3.1 per cent, much lower than the average GDP growth rate — 6.7 per cent. This growth in agriculture was also driven by non-crop sectors, including livestock. The average growth of the crop sector, which accounts for two-thirds of the agricultural sector GDP, was 0.3 per cent, the lowest in two decades.

Tillers of the land have left villages for that reason, and also because of the shrinking of landholdings. More than half of those who live off agriculture are landless peasants. And the others have very small holdings. According to a survey carried out by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, the av-

erage landholding size of an household had shrunk to 1.1 ha in 2016. In fact, 37 per cent of farm households owned land parcels of smaller than 0.4 ha, another 30 per cent had holdings which fall between 0.41 and 1.0 ha. Only 13 per cent agricultural households owned landholdings bigger than 2 ha. As a result, the proportion of those owning less than one ha reached 82.8 per cent — whereas a farm household needs to have at least 1 ha of land to make ends meet.

Secondly, irrigation has stagnated, with less than half of Indian farmland irrigated. Thirdly, rural India suffers from what Ashok Gulati calls the "urban consumer bias": To spare urban consumers, government has kept food prices very low. One of the techniques it used was to let imports of food products submerge the Indian market. Fourthly, budget cuts have affected key programmes such as the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and the Backward Regions Grant Fund as well as irrigation schemes, such as the Integrated Watershed Management Programme and Accelerated Irrigation Benefits. The actual allocation in agriculture has been short of the budgeted allocation since 2014.

Qualitatively, the agricultural sector has suffered because of the rise of monocultures based on the intensive use of chemical pesticides. Nearly 30 per cent of India's land has been degraded due to deforestation, intensive farming, soil erosion and groundwater depletion, resulting in desertification — the level of water tables fell by 65 per cent in 10 years.

For all these reasons, over half of the farmers are indebted: The average loan amount outstanding for a farm household in India in 2017 was Rs 47,000. More than 3,20,000 farmers committed suicide between 1995 and 2016, according to the National Crime Records Bureau — which has stopped providing this data since. Many others live in great economic distress. In fact, this crisis not only explains the increasingly large number of migrant workers, it also puts food security in jeopardy for the poor. While grain stocks have increased, access to food has not in rural India, especially for those who live below the poverty line. NSS data show that rural poverty rose about 4 percentage points between 2011-12 and 2017-18 to 30 per cent whereas urban poverty fell 5 percentage points over the same period to 9 per cent. India, which

was ranked 93 in 2015 in the Global Hunger Index, slipped to the 102nd rank (out of 117 countries) in 2019 — below all the other South Asian countries.

Thus, the COVID-19 crisis, by revealing the magnitude of the migrant worker phenomenon, should open the eyes of the urban dwellers to the grim situation of India's agriculture. This sector of the economy should become a priority again in term of policies. Indian agriculture needs more investments (in irrigation, for instance) and more financial support (by relaunching the MGNREGA, among other things). But not only that. Further liberalisation of Indian agriculture would hamper food security as the existing food procurement system is essential in maintaining food reserves and protection of vulnerable farmers from the whims of the global markets with the minimum support price offered for wheat and rice under the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act.

In the midst of every crisis lies an opportunity. An agro-ecological transition will regenerate not only the soil which was depleted due to the excessive use of chemical pesticides but also ensure sustainable supply of food in the long run. Since the agro-ecological system of farming is more bio-diverse in nature, it will make the system more resilient overall and provide a safety net for farmers in case of crop damage due to factors such as climate change or droughts. It will also strengthen food security and help the nation fight hunger and malnutrition. Finally, it will help bridge the urban-rural divide as much-needed investment will occur in rural areas after decades of neglect that created the staggering inequalities.

The transition to an agro-ecological system of agriculture has the capacity to become the engine to restart a sustainable economy by increasing soil fertility and reducing groundwater exploitation. Indian agriculture would provide millions with livelihoods, making migration to the city less necessary.

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KAPIL SIBAL

HEED NATURE'S WARNING

COVID-19 is yet another call to humankind to mend its ways or perish

THE ACTIVITIES OF *homo sapiens* are often toxic. They interfere with nature's design to sustain life. Viruses such as MERS-COV and SARS COV-2 are a warning to us. We must mend our ways or perish. COVID-19 has already taken over 50,000 lives globally. While we await the vaccine, we will have to take preventative measures to limit, as much as possible, the loss of more human lives.

With human activity coming to a standstill, the silence of our cities has emboldened animals to venture from their constricted habitats. Deers, sambar, nilgais and leopards are relishing the lockdown. The chirping of birds, a rarity in the past, is a pleasant regularity now. Woolly clouds floating across a blue Delhi sky is also a welcome, rare, sight.

The ambitious schemes of successive governments could not clean the Ganga. About Rs 5,000-crore was pumped in for the purpose, without any substantial outcomes. During the course of the lockdown, though, the Ganga is healing herself. Fewer people are at the ghats daily. In fact, the river water is fit for bathing with dissolved oxygen levels upstream being 8.1 mg per litre. The closure of industries along the river, including 400 tannery units, has helped.

The Yamuna, too, is sparkling. Several years of planning, huge allocation of funds did not produce the results we hoped for. But now, in

the space of a few days, the toxic foams have disappeared. The shutting down of industries has made all the difference. The Hindon river is showing similar signs of revival.

Research has shown that the source of new emerging diseases is through inter-species transmission. Human coronaviruses are associated with respiratory and gastro-nomic diseases. Animal-related viruses, also, cause severe respiratory, zoonotic and virologic diseases in their hosts. Most animals carrying viruses — bats, pigs, cattle or poultry — are isolated from humans. However, novel human pathogens emerge as a result of inter-species transmission. Studies have shown that the inter-species transmission of animal viruses to humans is a permanent threat to human life. Of the 12 bat species examined by experts, it was found that the coronavirus identified with bats was responsible for emerging diseases in humans. We need more studies of these viruses in animals to protect the human species from future attacks. The analysis of public Genome Sequence Data from SARS COV-2 and related viruses, clearly suggests that these viruses, through a process of natural selection from non-human hosts, jump to humans after the latter are directly exposed to the virus. As long as we keep consuming animals which host such viruses, the danger to the human race is real. Wuhan, the

epicentre of this virus, may well be associated with its transmission from non-human sources to human sources in China.

Our survival is also dependent on how we handle global warming. However, globally, people have become cynical about the intent of governments to meet such challenges. COP-25 in Spain also produced no results. The developed world is not honouring its commitments and the emerging economies are polluting like never before. Unless this is arrested immediately, global warming will be irreversible.

The availability of clean drinking water, and the conflicts emerging therefrom, will be the next battlefield. Global warming will impact agriculture which, in turn, will jeopardise food security. Our coastal areas will be inundated and island states are likely to disappear. In such a context, given the abysmal state of health infrastructure globally, it will be difficult to combat the onslaught of new viruses.

It is clear by now that if we threaten nature, nature will hit back: In this battle, we are sure to lose. Consumerism is now a self-destructive virus. Coronavirus is yet another warning for us to mend our ways. If not, our road to extinction is inevitable.

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



APRIL 10, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

ASSAM FOREIGNERS

THE 1961 CENSUS returns coupled with the 1962 electoral rolls and the land records of that time can be an acceptable criterion for identifying the "foreigners" in Assam. This is the reporter's inference after talking to the leaders of the All Assam Students Union which has so far stuck to 1851 as the base year, and has demanded the deportation of all those who have entered the state after that. The state governor, L.P. Singh, has already indicated to the students that the government might be willing to accept 1967 as the cut-off year. This would mean the deportation of nearly 1.8 million people against 1.2 million, if the original date on 1971 was adhered to.

INDIA-VIETNAM TALKS

THE VIETNAMESE PRIME minister, Pham Van Dong, indicated in New Delhi that there are differences in the respective positions of India and Vietnam on the Afghanistan question. Instead, he approvingly mentioned the initiative Cuba has launched to resolve the Afghanistan issue. Addressing a crowded news conference, Dong said Afghanistan had figured at his talks with the Indian prime minister. He said that both countries agreed in principle that the question had to be resolved on a correct basis but added that there are differences in the points of view of the government although such differences "are understandable and natural".

IRAN ON IRAQ

IRAN'S FOREIGN MINISTER, Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, claiming Iraq was an American stooge, announced that "we have decided to overthrow the Baathist regime in Baghdad," according to Teheran radio. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, spiritual leader and power behind Iran's revolution, declared in another London-monitored broadcast that Muslims of Iran and Iraq would remove the "evil Baathist leaders" of Iraq's ruling Arab Socialist Paity and "consign them to the dustbin of history." But neither broadcast made clear Iran's exact intentions in the growing conflict between the two oil-rich neighbours.

The law cannot fall silent

Nations must not ignore fundamental and overriding principles of existing international law in fight against pandemic



UPENDRA BAXI

THE CORONAVIRUS EPIDEMIC has now enveloped the globe and generated new forms of governmentality and bio-legitimation practices in its wake. But only new forms of human compassion and solidarity can help overcome this lethal and formidably grim challenge.

Even amidst the disease and death caused by the pandemic, theoretical discourse rages, on the one hand on the intensification of the state of exception in combating COVID-19 and, on the other, the projection of the crisis as an opportunity for building a new future for global politics marked by empathy, fraternity, justice, and rights.

We engage here with only one facet of the new developments: How to read international law in the context of the pointers to the future?

Respect for the norms and standards of international law is among the paramount constitutional duties of the state under Article 51 of the Constitution, regardless of the quibbles on whether the language here refers only to treaty/obligations or also to customary international law. And despite US President Donald Trump's recent threat of actions against the WHO, international norms, standards, and doctrines remain relevant to making national policy and law.

The difference between the United Nations as a site of normative discursivity and as a site of doing global power politics is sadly manifest even now in the accelerated pace of the pandemic. President Trump's insistence on calling it a "Chinese virus" renders it extremely unlikely that the pandemic will be discussed during the current monthly presidency of the UN Security Council by China. The threat of veto by China and Russia will always loom large whenever the matter is placed for discussion.

But the UN is also a site of systems of norm enunciation. Along with the International Law Commission, it is responsible for the progressive codification of law. The UN system has developed lawmaking and framework treaties as well as provided auspices for systems of "soft" law that may eventually become the binding law.

Some of the norms of international law are robust and deeply relevant. For example, the peremptory *jus cogens* — a few fundamental, overriding principles of international law such as crimes against humanity, genocide, and human trafficking apply to all states. And Article 53 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties goes so far as to declare that a "treaty is void if, at the time of its conclusion, it conflicts with a peremptory norm of general international law". And even when ingredients of genocide remain difficult to prove, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has held, in 2007, that states have a duty to prevent and punish acts and omissions that eventually furnish elements for the commission of crime of genocide. There also exist *erga omnes* rules prescribing specifically-determined obligations which states owe to the international community as a whole. This was enunciated by the ICJ in 1970 for four situations — the outlawing of acts of aggression;



CR Sasikumar

the outlawing of genocide; protection from slavery; and protection from racial discrimination. A great significance of this judicial dictum is that it lays down obligations which transcend consensual relations among states.

In addition, there are three other sets of international law obligations. These are primarily derived from the no-harm principles crystallised in the International Law Commission's 2001 Draft Articles on the Prevention of Transboundary Harm (DAPTH) and the Paris Framework Agreement on Climate Change, 2015.

The DAPTH has carefully developed norms of due diligence, stressing all the way that these may be adapted to contextual exigencies. But due diligence obligations certainly extend beyond local and national boundaries, especially because the environmental problems have a transboundary impact. Each state is obliged to observe these standards in the fight against COVID-19 as a matter of international law.

The second set of obligations relates to the other core human rights measures — no law or policy to combat epidemics or pandemic can go against the rights of migrant workers, internally displaced peoples, and refugees and asylum seekers. Respect for the inherent dignity of individuals in combating COVID-19 and for the rights of equal health for all, non-discrimination, and the norms of human dignity further reinforce accountability and the transparency of state and other social actors. Panicky and sadist policing, including shoot at sight orders in collective exodus situations, and militaristic responses to food riots de-

Respect for norms and standards of international law is among the paramount constitutional duties of the State under Article 51 of the Constitution, regardless of the quibbles on whether the language here only refers to treaty/obligations or also to customary international law. And, despite US President Donald Trump's recent threat of actions against WHO, international norms, standards, and doctrines remain relevant to making national policy and law.

tify health lockouts and curfews.

The third set of obligations arises out of international humanitarian law. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) is pertinent here. India did not subscribe to any conspiracy or racist theory about the origins of COVID-19 — in fact, India's foreign minister rightly affirmed the BTWC obligations on March 26 (on the 40th anniversary of that Convention). Surely, this global and non-discriminatory disarmament convention deserves applause because it outlaws a whole range of weapons of mass destruction. India has, and rightly so, called for "high priority" to "full and effective implementation by all states parties".

Multinational and domestic corporations are also liable before an increasing number of domestic courts. As if to confirm this, the Canadian Supreme Court, on February 28, held that customary international law can give rise to a direct claim in Canada if obligations pertaining to forced labour, slavery, cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, and crimes against humanity are violated.

The starting point of a determined fight against COVID-19 has to be a full-throated repudiation of an ancient Latin maxim, *inter arma enim silent leges* (in times of war, the law falls silent). Combating this fearsome pandemic calls for re-dedication to nested international law obligations and frameworks.

The writer is professor of law, University of Warwick, and former vice chancellor of Universities of South Gujarat and Delhi

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"In any return to normalcy, comprehensive diagnostic testing will be required to isolate the sick and help certify those who can go back to work safely"
— THE WASHINGTON POST

After the storm passes

We will need to strike right balance between public health and individual's right to privacy



VENKATESH HARIHARAN

THE NOVEL coronavirus outbreak has brought into sharp focus the promise and perils of data surveillance in the healthcare sector. As India faces an unprecedented public health crisis that has resulted in a countrywide lockdown, policymakers are trying to figure out exit strategies. Ultimately, lockdowns are brute force instruments and are unsustainable over long periods of time. To bring daily life back to normal at the earliest, some governments are deploying apps for self-diagnosis, contact tracing, quarantine and curfew passes as mitigation strategies. For example, the Indian government has launched the Aarogya Setu app for contact tracing, and as a medium for sharing authentic information with citizens.

At this moment, when all of India is faced with a 21-day lockdown (and perhaps a partial lockdown after 21 days), that is estimated to cost \$120 billion, privacy seems to be the least of our worries. However, privacy is a fundamental right of every citizen and the state has the primary responsibility of upholding this right. For example, when the COVID quarantine lists that help identify affected individuals are released in the public domain, the privacy of those individuals is violated, leading to social ostracism. Commentators as diverse as Yuval Noah Harari and Edward Snowden have warned that heightened surveillance during healthcare emergencies can make the surveillance state the "new normal" with frightening possibilities for individual liberty.

In the wake of corona, governments have released apps for self-diagnosis, contact tracing and curfew passes. These apps can help bring daily life back to normalcy soon. Self-diagnosis apps can help individuals do a quick check and see if the sore throat, fever or other symptoms they have are minor problems or symptoms of coronavirus. These apps can be the first line of defence, and can protect our underfunded medical system from being overloaded by panic-stricken individuals seeking to be tested for the virus.

Contact tracing can help with one of the most difficult challenges in dealing with a highly infectious and asymptomatic pathogen like the coronavirus. If a person is diagnosed with the virus, they may not be able to remember all those they came in contact with in the 14 days that it takes for the symptoms to manifest. Widespread use of contact tracing apps in the early days of the virus can minimise the need for prolonged lockdowns.

In times of lockdowns, people still need their daily essentials like grains, eggs, milk and other supplies. If those supply chains are hit by the shutdown, prices of essential commodities rise sharply, leading to panic buying. Many individuals may also have le-

gitimate reasons for stepping out of their homes — visiting a family member in a hospital, for instance. Curfew pass apps can help the police quickly issue passes to doctors, caregivers, delivery services, couriers and others who keep the wheels of our economy running.

However, the data collected through these apps also provides huge surveillance capabilities to the state. Therefore, as Harari points out, "When choosing between alternatives, we should ask ourselves not only how to overcome the immediate threat, but also what kind of world we will inhabit once the storm passes?"

Where the collection of data through such apps is done by the state, the state must recognise that it is not the owner of the collected data, but merely the custodian of data. Secondly, as compared to the private sector, the state has a much higher responsibility for safeguarding data, because its control of the police, tax authorities and other instruments gives it great coercive power. The threats of state misuse of data are, therefore, much higher than its misuse by the private sector. The only way to mitigate this is by putting privacy and good data governance practices at the centre of such data collection, and by instituting checks and balances on state power.

Wherever data is collected by the state, it must be the minimum required to get the job done. For example, self-testing apps should not collect personally identifiable information, except essential information like age, and gender. This data should be deleted after the crisis is over.

Singapore seems to have set a good example with its Trace Together app — a voluntary app that uses bluetooth technology to detect proximity to other users having this same app. When the app is downloaded, a random number is assigned to the user, and the data is stored on the phone itself in an encrypted manner. Singapore's Ministry of Health (MoH) is the only entity that can decrypt this data, and it can request the users to share it if the user is diagnosed with COVID-19. This enables MoH's contact tracing team to quickly identify other individuals who are at risk. By requiring the data to be shared only when the individual has been identified as infected with COVID-19, Trace Together strikes a good balance between public health and protecting an individual's privacy.

Ultimately data collection practices by the state boil down to the social contract for data between citizens and the state. A responsible state will collect the minimum amount of data required for a specific purpose and delete it after the purpose has been served. No state should take its citizens' trust for granted. If citizens do not trust the state as the custodian of their data, there will be digital disobedience. Nuanced data collection and governance practices combined with independent audits of these practices will help the state win the trust and collaboration of its citizens. Without such sensitivity, a healthcare crisis could be compounded into a human rights disaster.

The writer is senior fellow at IDFC Institute and member of the Data Governance Network

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AUSTERITY IN CRISIS

THIS REFERS TO editorial, 'Out of the old box' (IE, April 9). One wonders what is wrong in the austerity measure suggested by Congress President Sonia Gandhi. The government has spent a whopping Rs 5,700 crore on advertising between 2014 and 2019. Why not cut the expenditure and spend the amount for relief measures? When the government is asking people to donate, it should also take steps to augment resources. As far as the revenue for media is concerned, they should source it from the private players at this time of distress.

Vidhya B Ragunath, Thanjavur

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Out of the old box' (IE, April 9). Indian media has already been feeling the pinch of the lockdown. As advertisement revenues continue to plummet, Congress President Sonia Gandhi further calls for a two-year blanket ban on government ads in the media. Not only is her message badly-timed, but the suggestion completely unhelpful in these trying times. The Indian Newspaper Society is right to call out her awful idea as an attempt of "financial censorship" of the free press.

Varun Das, Zirakpur

GREATER WOES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial 'Opening up' and the article, 'Listening as gover-

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

nance' (IE April 8). I remember that during Bengal Famine of 1943, while Mahatma Gandhi appealed to extend assistance to all sufferers, M A Jinnah advocated help for the Muslims only. Your opinion that impending restrictions will have to give way to a dynamic strategy allowing resumption of economic activity is commendable. Ways and means need to be chalked out as the adage goes "the serpent also does, but the lathi doesn't break". But our economy stands shattered, daily wagers are dying of hunger and the elderly are feeling suffocated. The lockdown, as at present, gives more woes than comforts.

LR Gupta, Lucknow

Pollution and pandemic

Health crisis has cleaned up air. It is global community's duty to carry that forward



EESHAN CHATURVEDI

THE CORONAVIRUS pandemic and its fallout have had devastating effects in most parts of the world. The swift and aggressive localisation of the world has been stopped in its tracks. Industrial economies, supply chains, essential commodities, public health services, and various other activities have taken a serious hit because of the much-needed governmental regulations to curb the spread of Covid-19. A silver lining, though, has been the effect of regulatory social distancing and the blanket lockdown of the industrial and service sectors on the environment.

There are four main sources of air pollution: Stationary sources such as industries, power plants and factories; mobile sources or vehicular transport; area sources such as agricultural tracts and cities; and natural sources, which include volcanoes, cyclones and wildfires. The current lockdown seems to have snuffed out a lot of the first three sources. The industrial, tourism and service sectors have been brought to a standstill.

The effect of all this is apparent. For instance, the Air Quality Index (AQI) at Anand Vihar — infamous for being one of the most

polluted regions in Delhi due to the plethora of industries in its vicinity — has come down from 229 (deemed poor) about this time last year to about 80 currently (regarded as satisfactory). The difference is, in fact, much more when Anand Vihar's current AQI is compared to that in November last year — the region had recorded 447 then. There have been similar improvements in other parts of the country — the world, in fact.

The natural question, then, is: Why have governments not been able to enforce such environmental measures proactively? Why is the current situation a by-product of managing a pandemic? The most obvious — and understandable — answer would be that the lockdown was needed to bring down the fatalities caused by the pandemic.

However, according to a World Health Organisation report, the combined effects of ambient (outdoor) and household air pollution are responsible for 70,00,000 deaths every year — largely as a result of increased mortality caused by heart diseases, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, lung cancer and acute respiratory infections. Compare this to the about 50,000 deaths in the three months of the pandemic — about

2,00,000 deaths a year, via simple extrapolation, discounting other developments. That is less than 3 per cent of the deaths caused by air pollution alone. We have not even considered other sources of pollution — water pollution, hazardous waste pollution — as well as displacement due to glacial recessions and climate change.

The effort at reducing social interactions and cutting down commercial activities has been almost on a global scale — and that has brought down pollution. This shows that positive actions by a handful of countries or regions do not always improve the environment. Industries displaced from environmentally-regulated regions move to other regions. Of course, governments would be hard-pressed to impose measures designed for an international pandemic to address environmental issues like air pollution. It is also not pragmatic to impose a blanket lockdown to address air pollution. Policy decisions will have to balance socio-economic considerations with health imperatives. Inter-generational equity should be the thrust of such efforts.

Under Common Law, the public trust doctrine is often invoked in cases of large-

scale environmental harm. The doctrine presupposes the government to be the custodian of the environment — its protection, therefore, is the responsibility of the government. However, during the current pandemic the maximum stimulus, especially in the technology and service sectors, has come from the private sector.

The government can consider promoting innovation in the private sector in matters pertaining to the environment. Individual sectors can be made custodians of regions to curb pollution. For instance, green indices of companies can be made a factor in their market valuation. Similarly, instead of adding fuel/carbon tax at the time of issuing flight tickets, the same could be added to the yearly tax returns to make a person aware of his/her carbon footprint. Some of these measures can be scaled globally within a short time.

It has required a pandemic to clean up the environment. It is the global community's duty to carry the task forward.

The writer is an environmental and energy lawyer and an assistant professor at Jindal School for Environment and Sustainability

10 THE OUTBREAK THE WORLD

PANDEMIC WATCH



During a drive in Karachi. Reuters

PAKISTAN

Scope of CPEC to be 'enhanced in 2nd phase'

Islamabad: The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is at the cusp of launching its second phase to add more sectors like agriculture and tourism, a senior official has said, rejecting reports that the project is slowing down due to the outbreak. China has committed to invest over \$60 billion in Pakistan as part of the CPEC under which it planned to build a number of special economic zones. Asim Saleem Bajwa, chairman CPEC Authority, in a tweet on Wednesday rejected reports about the adverse impact of the coronavirus on CPEC projects.

YEMEN

Saudi coalition starts unilateral virus ceasefire

Riyadh: The Saudi-led coalition began a unilateral ceasefire in Yemen's long war on Thursday, saying it hoped the initiative to prevent coronavirus in the impoverished country would lead to a wider political solution. The Iran-backed Huthi rebels have not made any comment on the coalition's declaration of a two-week pause in the five-year conflict that took effect from 0900 GMT. If the ceasefire does hold, it would be the first breakthrough since the warring parties agreed to a UN-brokered ceasefire in the port city of Hodeida during talks in Sweden in late 2018.

AUSTRALIA

Police raid ship at centre of virus outbreak

Sydney: Police wearing protective gear boarded a cruise ship to seize evidence and question crew members of the vessel linked to hundreds of coronavirus infections and 15 deaths across Australia. About 2,700 passengers disembarked from the ship on March 19 in Sydney and it has since become the largest source of coronavirus infections in Australia. More than 600 cases of COVID-19 and 15 deaths are linked to the ship, the Ruby Princess. About 200 crew have shown symptoms of COVID-19, while 18 have tested positive.

OVER 1.5 MILLION VIRUS CASES and 90,000 deaths reported worldwide

BASELESS ACCUSATIONS of cover-up, claims China

VICTIMS OF UNFAIR TREATMENT are the Taiwanese: Tsai Ing-wen

Faced racist slurs from Taiwan: WHO chief

Taiwan protests accusation, calls for Tedros to clarify, apologise to country

Tedros politicising pandemic, siding with China, says Trump

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TAIPEI, APRIL 9

TAIWAN'S FOREIGN ministry on Thursday strongly protested accusations from the head of the World Health Organisation that the self-governing island was linked to and condoned racist personal attacks on him.

A ministry statement expressed "strong dissatisfaction and a high degree of regret" with WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus' remarks at a press briefing in Geneva on Wednesday. It requested he "immediately correct his unfounded allegations, immediately clarify, and apologise to our country."

At the press briefing, Tedros vocally defended himself and the UN health agency's response to the coronavirus pandemic. He accused Taiwan's foreign ministry of being linked to a months-long campaign against him and said that since the emergence of the new coronavirus, he has been personally attacked, including receiving at times, death threats and racist abuse.

"This attack came from Taiwan," said Tedros, a former Ethiopian health and foreign minister and the WHO's first African leader.

He said Taiwanese diplomats were aware of the attacks but did not dissociate themselves from



Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen at a military camp in Tainan on Thursday. Reuters

them. "They even started criticising me in the middle of all those insults and slurs," Tedros said. "I say it today because it's enough." The basis of his allegations was unclear.

President Tsai Ing-wen also weighed in, saying on Facebook that Taiwan does not condone the use of racist remarks to attack those with different opinions.

"If Director-General Tedros could withstand pressure from China and come to Taiwan to see

Taiwan's efforts to fight COVID-19 for himself, he would be able to see that the Taiwanese people are the true victims of unfair treatment," she wrote, referring to Taiwan's exclusion from the WHO at China's insistence. "I believe that the WHO will only truly be complete if Taiwan is included."

Tedros was elected with the strong support of China, one of five permanent veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council and which claims Taiwan

as its own territory. He has firmly backed Beijing's claims to have been open and transparent about the outbreak, despite strong evidence that it suppressed early reports on infections.

Taiwan has one of the most robust public health systems, and has won praise for its handling of the outbreak. Despite its close proximity to China and the frequency of travel between the sides, Taiwan has reported just 379 cases and five deaths.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, BEIJING, APR 9

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump has fired a fresh salvo at the World Health Organisation, accusing its chief of siding with China and "politicising" the pandemic while repeating his threat to freeze the agency's funding.

Trump's allegation comes a day after the US President threatened to put a "very powerful" hold on US funding to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and criticised it for having "missed the call" in its response to the pandemic.

The president's fresh allegation comes after WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus cautioned against politicisation of COVID-19 and said that such a move will only result in "many more body bags".

Hours later at the White House conference, Trump agreed COVID-19 should not be politicised, but alleged that the WHO chief was doing exactly that and was siding with China.

AFRICAN LEADERS RALLY AROUND TEDROS

SOUTH AFRICAN president Cyril Ramaphosa said the WHO chief had shown "exceptional leadership... from the very earliest stages of this global health crisis"



RWANDAN LEADER Paul Kagame said the WHO chief "has the full confidence and support of Africa," while AU Commission head Moussa Faki urged leaders to focus on fighting COVID-19

AFRICA ACCOUNTS for a fraction of global cases, but its countries are feeling the impact with economies expected to contract, putting about 20 million jobs at risk

ous years. And they got to do better than that. They got to do better. When you talk about politics, I can't believe he's talking about politics look at the relationship they have to China," Trump said.

China on Thursday denied any cover-up in reporting the initial information of the outbreak as it put up a staunch defence of Ghebreyesus.

"China was the first country to report the COVID-19 to the WHO, (and) that doesn't mean the virus originated from

Wuhan," Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here.

"Epidemic may break out first anywhere in the world. But its origin is a matter of science and we should leave it to science and medical community," said Zhao.

"Accusation of China covered up the epidemic and lack of transparency is groundless," Zhao said, adding that China had informed WHO of the genetic sequence of the virus which was used by American labs.

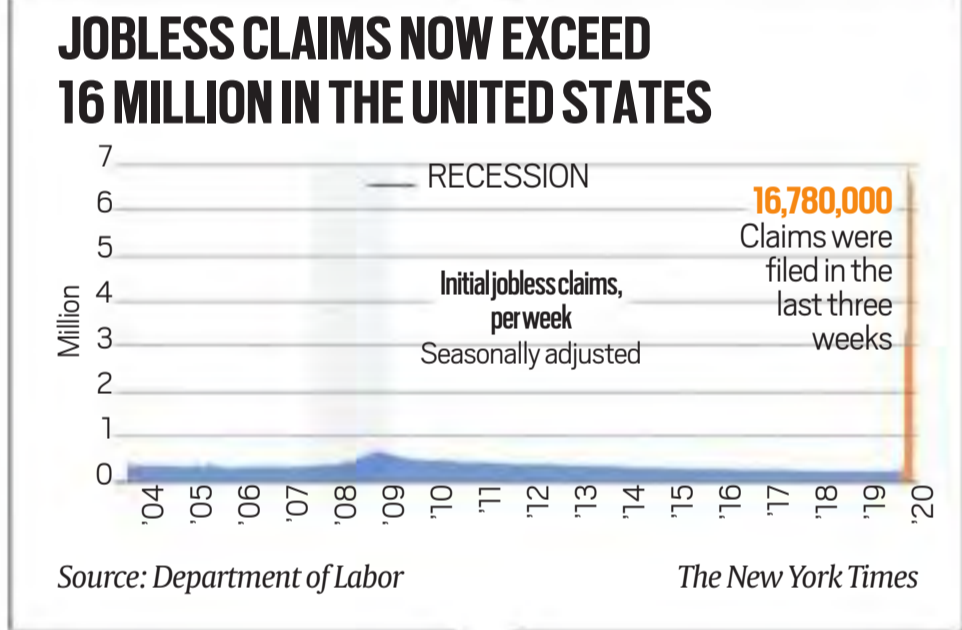
US jobless roll rises by 6.6 mn; NY death count hits new high

AGENCIES
NEW YORK, APRIL 9

ANOTHER 6.6 million people filed for unemployment benefits last week as the coronavirus outbreak continued its devastating march through the American economy, the Labor Department reported on Thursday.

With astonishing swiftness, the pandemic has shut down both longstanding and new businesses, leaving veteran workers and recent hires in nearly every type of industry without a pay-check. In just three weeks, more than 16 million Americans have lost their jobs.

Many Wall Street analysts concede that at this point, forecasts are not much more than gussied-up guesses: The purposeful and sudden halt in economic activity has no precedent,



and no one knows when the restrictions on movement and commerce will be lifted.

New York state set another single-day record of COVID-19 deaths. The number of known infections in New York state alone approached 150,000. Nearly 430,000 cases of

COVID-19, the highly infectious lung disease caused by the coronavirus, were confirmed in the US as of Wednesday afternoon, including over 14,700 deaths. For the second straight day the virus killed at least 1,900 in a 24-hour period.

Cuomo said 779 people had died in the past day in his state.

UK death toll up by 881; PM 'makes positive steps'

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, APRIL 9

BRITAIN ON Thursday reported 881 more fatalities due to COVID-19, bringing the country's total toll to 7,978, as Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the strict lockdown measures in place in the UK must continue for more time to ensure there is no second wave.

Raab, who is deputising for Prime Minister Boris Johnson while he is in hospital recovering from COVID-19, confirmed that the premier's condition continues to improve.

"The Prime Minister remains in intensive care, but he continues to make positive steps forwards and is in good spirits," said Raab.

The senior Cabinet minister revealed another record increase in the daily coronavirus related death toll of 881 to hit 7,978 as he urged the British public to continue to follow the government's social distancing guidance.

After chairing an emergency Cobra committee meeting earlier on Thursday, Raab said the early signs suggest all the lockdown measures are having an impact but it is too early to say that "conclusively". PTI

BANGLADESH

Rohingya camps under 'complete lockdown'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COX'S BAZAR, APRIL 9

BANGLADESH HAS imposed a "complete lockdown" in Cox's Bazar district — home to over a million Rohingya refugees from neighbouring Myanmar — to halt the spread of coronavirus, officials said Thursday.

Experts have warned the disease could spread quickly through the cramped, sewage-soaked alleys where the persecuted Muslim minority are housed in canvas and bamboo shacks.

With the official number of cases doubling to more than 200



IN THE NEW WORLD

Nurses hold newborn babies wearing protective face shields during the outbreak at a hospital in Bangkok, Thailand, on Thursday. Reuters

EXPLAINED

Refugee camps vulnerable to coronavirus outbreak

REFUGEE CAMPS such as the one in Myanmar are considered particularly vulnerable to the outbreak. One reason is because of the sheer volume of people living in congested space, making social distancing difficult. The situation is exacerbated by the poor medical facilities and lack of protective gear in such camps. Internet ban in the Bangladesh camp has also led to the spread of rumours and difficulty in accessing accurate information.

nationwide in the last five days, officials ordered a lockdown from late Wednesday.

The area "will be put under

complete lockdown — no entry, no exit — until the situation improves", the directive said.

Police and soldiers set up

OTHER TOP GLOBAL STORIES

Damascus slams 'misleading' chemical arms watchdog report

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DAMASCUS, APRIL 9

THE SYRIAN government on Thursday criticised as "misleading" a report by the global chemical weapons watchdog that for the first time blamed Damascus for toxic attacks in 2017.

"The report of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on the use of poisonous substances in the town of Latamneh in 2017 is misleading and contains falsified and fabricated conclusions



Bashar al-Assad

aimed at falsifying truths and accusing the Syrian government," the foreign ministry said.

The OPCW findings published Wednesday accused President Bashar al-Assad's air force of using the nerve gas sarin and chlorine three times in 2017 on that town in northwest Syria. The Syrian government said it

rejected the contents of the report. Damascus "absolutely denies ever having used poisonous gases in the town of Latamneh or in any other Syrian city or village," the statement said.

Wednesday's report was the first from a new investigative team set up by the OPCW to identify the perpetrators of attacks in Syria's nine-year-old civil war.

It said two Syrian Arab Air Force Sukhoi SU-22 jet fighters dropped two bombs containing sarin on Latamneh on March 24 and 30, 2017.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BAGHDAD, APRIL 9

IRAQI PRESIDENT Barham Saleh nominated spy chief Mustafa Kadhemi on Thursday as the country's third prime minister-designate this year, moments after his predecessor ended his bid to form a government.

Kadhemi, the 53-year-old head of the National Intelligence Service, has ascended to the role as Iraq faces a budget crisis brought on by the collapse in world oil prices and the spread of the novel coronavirus.

"This is a huge responsibility, and a difficult task," said Saleh in his nominating speech, describing Kadhemi as someone with integrity and reason.

His nomination was attended by ministers, political rivals and even the United Nations' representative in Iraq, indicating widespread support for Kadhemi that neither of the previous PM-designates had enjoyed.

Moments before the ceremony, his predecessor Adnan Zurfur announced he was withdrawing his candidacy due to "internal and external reasons," without elaborating.

Pak asks Afghanistan to hand over mastermind of gurdwara attack

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, APRIL 9

PAKISTAN ON Thursday asked Afghanistan to hand over the chief of the Islamic State's Khorasan unit, Aslam Farooqi, the mastermind behind a deadly terror attack on a prominent gurdwara in Kabul last month.

A heavily armed Islamic State-Khorasan suicide bomber stormed the gurdwara in the heart of Afghanistan's capital on March 25, killing 25 Sikhs and injuring eight others.



The attack killed 25. Reuters/File

Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security had said Farooqi, also known as Abdullah Orakzai, was arrested along with 19 other commanders.

"The ambassador of Afghanistan to Pakistan was called to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and conveyed Pakistan's views with regard to the arrest of ISIS-K leader, Aslam Farooqi, by the Afghan authorities on April 5, 2020," a statement issued by the Foreign Office said here.

"It was underscored to the ambassador that since Farooqi was involved in anti-Pakistan activities in Afghanistan, he should be handed over to Pakistan for further investigations," the statement added. PTI

11 ECONOMY

GOLD	RUPEE	OIL	SILVER
₹41,705	₹76.28	\$26.15	₹38,100

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

SENSEX: 31,159.62 ▲ 1265.66 NIFTY: 9,111.90 ▲ 363.15 NIKKEI: 19,345.77 ▼ 747 HANG SENG: 24,300.33 ▲ 329.96 FTSE: 5,753.82 ▲ 76.09 DAX: 10,398.18 ▲ 65.29

*International market data till 1900 IST

COVID-19 EFFECT PROVIDENT FUND

EPFO processes nearly 1.37 lakh claims, disburses ₹279.65 cr through online facility

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

THE EMPLOYEES' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has processed nearly 1.37 lakh claims and disbursed an amount of ₹279.65 crore since the launch of the online facility to allow withdrawal not exceeding the basic wages and dearness allowances for three months or up to 75 per cent of the amount standing to a member's credit in the EPF account, whichever is less, in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The system, as it stands today, is processing all applications which are fully KYC compliant within less than 72 hours. Members, who have applied for claims in some other category, can also file claim to fight pandemic and depending upon the KYC compliance condition of each member, every effort is being made to settle claims at the earliest," an EPFO official said. Many EPFO subscribers had raised the issue of delay in processing of the claims, which officials said are being addressed. "Fully KYC compliant applications are being cleared first automatically," another official of the Organisation said, adding that the rest of the applications are being looked into.

The scheme allowing advance withdrawal was notified on March 27; online facility was launched on March 29

EPFO has relaxed the date of birth correction criteria to ease KYC (know your customer) compliance. It is accepting the date of birth recorded in the Aadhaar card of a subscriber as a proof for rectification of the date of birth in PF records.

Moreover, all cases with variation in date of birth up to three years are now being accepted by EPFO, officials said.

Last month, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman — as part of the government's financial package to counter the COVID-19 outbreak — had announced measures for a section of organised workers by bearing the outgo on contribution of 24 per cent for establishments having up to 100 workers with 90 per cent having income below ₹15,000 and relaxing withdrawal conditions from EPF accounts.

The scheme allowing advance withdrawal was notified on March 27 and the online facility was launched on March 29.

IIP FOR FEBRUARY EXPANDS TO 4.5% FROM 0.2% A YEAR AGO

Factory output in Feb at 7-month high; subdued growth in Apr-Feb

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

FACTORY OUTPUT rose to a seven-month high of 4.5 per cent in February from 0.2 per cent a year ago, primarily due to a low base effect and pickup in mining and electricity output. Capital goods and consumer durables output continued to contract, indicating weak investment and consumption demand, data released by National Statistical Office (NSO) on Thursday showed.

Cumulatively, the growth of Index of Industrial Production (IIP) remained subdued at 0.9 per cent for the 11 months of April-February, as against 4.0 per cent growth in the year-ago period. The COVID-19 outbreak is expected to adversely impact industrial growth in the coming months.

Manufacturing sector, which carries a weight of 77.63 per cent

INDUSTRIAL GROWTH TO BE HIT

■ The expansion in February was due to a low base effect and pickup in mining and electricity output; COVID-19 is likely to hit industrial growth in coming months

in the IIP, grew 3.2 per cent in February, gaining from the low base last year. The sector had recorded a contraction of 0.3 per cent in the corresponding period of last year, the data showed.

For April-February, manufacturing sector has grown a meagre 0.6 per cent as against 3.9 per cent growth last year. Capital goods output, a measure of investment demand, has contracted in each of

the eleven months this fiscal, declining 9.7 per cent in February compared to 9.3 per cent contraction last year. Cumulatively, capital goods output has contracted by 11.4 per cent in April-February from 4.1 per cent growth last year.

Consumer durables output posted a contraction of 6.4 per cent in February as against a growth of 0.9 per cent a year ago.

The industry group 'Manufacture of basic metals' recorded the highest growth of 18.2 per cent, followed by 8.0 per cent in 'Manufacture of chemicals and chemical products' and in 'Manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products'. 'Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers' recorded the highest contraction of 15.6 per cent, followed by (-)14.8 per cent in 'Manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products' and (-)9.9 per cent in 'Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and

equipment'.

Economists said the shutdown is likely to reverse the growth trend of industrial output. "Going forward, we will see a reversal of trend in March due to the shutdown and the March-end phenomenon of companies pushing production to meet targets will not hold. For the year, production could be in range of 1-1.5 per cent at best," Madan Sabnavis, chief economist, CARE Ratings said.

Rajani Sinha, chief economist, Knight Frank India, said, "There is not much to cheer from this data as IIP growth is likely to sharply fall going forward... Even after the lockdown is lifted, demand for consumer discretionary items will take time to recover given the poor consumer sentiments in midst of job losses and pay cuts. Capital goods demand will also remain weak as businesses will be wary of capex in these uncertain times."

Sensex jumps 1,266 pts on hopes of stimulus, virus cases peaking out

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 9

STOCK MARKETS on Thursday gained another 4 per cent, amid expectations of more stimulus measures and reports of COVID-19 infections peaking and coming down in the near future. The Sensex rallied by 1,265.66 points, or 4.23 per cent, to 31,159.62 and the 50-share Nifty increased by 363.15 points, or 4.15 per cent, to 9,111.90. With this gain, the Sensex has recovered 12.93 per cent, or 3,668 points, during the week.

Vinod Nair, head of research, Geojit Financial Services, said Indian markets, in sync with global markets, were up again on expectations of infections peaking out and more stimulus measures to be announced.

"On the back of positive global cues, the market rose on spirited all-round buying. Automobiles, financials and pharmaceuticals led the charge despite profit booking witnessed during the session. Today's trade saw even consumer discretionary and consumer durables stage a comeback ahead of expectations of a stimulus to help MSME weather the pandemic," said S Ranganathan, head of Research at LKP Securities.

Indian indices jumped higher during the week taking significant cues from its global peers, mainly from the US bourses.

"Confidence returned with reduction in the number of daily COVID cases in some countries. Sentiments are changing from ultra-pessimistic to mildly pessimistic, which is driving markets higher. However, one must not forget the trillions of dollars of economic stimulus packages

EXPLAINED Recent uptrend may be short-term

MARKETS ARE keenly awaiting another stimulus to revive the economy battered by COVID-19. There are expectations that worst affected sectors and MSMEs may get some relief in the package to be announced by the government.

While the Sensex has shot up by over 3,500 points this week, analysts say the uptrend seems to be a short-term bear market rally and may not be sustainable.

in the US, Japan and other economies that have boosted confidence to a large extent," said Jimeet Modi, founder and CEO, Samco Securities.

According to analysts, once the lockdown is lifted, markets will take note of the ground reality and react accordingly as the aftereffects of the lockdown will emerge only then.

Meanwhile, the rupee fell to a new intra-day low against the US dollar despite strong traction in domestic equity markers.

It opened at 76.09 before sliding to a record low of 76.55 against the dollar. However, the domestic unit pulled back to finish at 76.28 as against its previous close of 76.34.

'Half a billion more people face poverty due to virus'

Around half a billion people could be pushed into poverty as a result of the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, an Oxfam report said



● **RESCUE PACKAGE FOR POOR COUNTRIES:** World leaders need to agree on an economic rescue package to keep poor countries and poor communities afloat

● **6%-8%: percentage of global population that could be forced into poverty as governments shut down entire sectors of their economies to manage the spread of the virus**

MEASURES RECOMMENDED:
■ \$1 trillion: Worth of debt payments of developing countries due in 2020, which needs to be cancelled
■ \$500 million: Increase in overseas aid
■ \$1 trillion: Value of special drawing right at IMF that needs to be created

URGENT ACTION NEEDED FROM RICHER COUNTRIES: Unless richer countries step up their efforts to help the developing world, the fight against poverty could be set back by a decade and by as much as 30 years in some areas

Source: Oxfam/PTI

EXEMPTION ON BASIC CUSTOMS DUTY TO BE AVAILABLE UP TO SEPTEMBER 30: FINANCE MINISTRY

Import of COVID-19 preventive products to get duty exemption

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

THE GOVERNMENT has exempted import of ventilators, face masks, surgical masks, PPE, COVID-19 test kits and inputs for manufacturing these items from levy of basic customs duty and health cess. The exemption from import duty would be applicable till September 30, the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

"In the context of COVID-19 situation, considering the immediate requirement of ventilators and other items, the Central Government has granted exemption from Basic Customs Duty and Health cess, on the import of the following goods, with immediate effect: ventilators, face masks, surgical masks, personal protection

equipment (PPE), COVID-19 test kits, inputs for manufacture of the above items. This basic customs duty exemption shall be available up to 30th September, 2020," the statement said.

However, certain sections of the country's medical devices industry feel the move may not be as beneficial as the government hopes it to be. "If the companies intending to import products like ventilators are headquartered in a country which needs these products more because they have a higher number of serious cases and deaths, how much India will be able to import will remain a question mark," said an industry executive, requesting anonymity.

"In the US already, there is a huge demand for products like ventilators. Manufacturing is also shut in Ireland, and Germany

doesn't seem far off. Would these companies be able to make enough to send to India as well?" the person said. "The duty reduction on components might help though," the executive added.

"How does this import duty juggling make a difference if the government is the one buying the ventilators? The government levies the duties and gets the same back, whether it is zero per cent or 15 per cent. For PPEs and other items, it may help the public. India is publicly admitting that our 'Make in India' that was hyped so much for many years hasn't yielded any result and we have to import critical goods, be it during normal days or during a crisis," said Vishwasprasad Alva, managing director, Skanray.

"AiMed strongly protests this. This is a repeat mistake that has

led to India already becoming so import dependent on medical devices. The weakness of the Indian medical system is well known to all... Had the Indian medical device industry been more stronger and robust and well-protected, the manufacturers of masks and PPE kits would have been more modernised, more automated and better placed to ramp up capacities," said Rajiv Nath, forum coordinator, Association of Indian Medical Devices Industry (AiMed).

At present, the basic customs duty on some of the medical devices such as ventilators is 7.5 per cent. Meanwhile, an empowered group of the government has been trying to help domestic manufacturers of PPEs and masks to boost their production. The companies are attempting to

boost their capacity from 1.10 lakh to 1.35 lakh units per day, said a senior government official close to the development.

"The requirement is more, so the government has also been arranging for imports. It is coming from different countries, wherever there is availability," the official said.

India has long been dependent on imports for most of its medical devices. For instance, the average demand for ventilators in India is around 8,000 pieces a year. Of this, only 10 per cent is manufactured and supplied in the country. With the number of COVID-19 cases rising, the country might need anywhere between 1.10 lakh-2.20 lakh ventilators by May 15, in the worst case scenario, according to an analysis by think tank Brookings India.

Lockdown, global trade dislocation to hit Indian economy: RBI report

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 9

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) has warned that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic would impact economic activity in India directly due to lockdowns and through second round effects operating through global trade and growth.

"While efforts are being mounted on a war footing to arrest its spread, COVID-19 would impact economic activity in India directly through domestic lockdown," the RBI said in its 'Monetary Policy Report-April 2020'. Though it forecast retail inflation to decline to 2.4 per cent by the fourth quarter of 2020-21, the central bank refused to make

any estimate on the GDP growth in the wake of "highly fluid circumstances". Many global rating agencies and banks have downgraded India's GDP growth to below two per cent.

"Second round effects would operate through a severe slowdown in global trade and growth. More immediately, spillovers are being transmitted through finance and confidence channels to domestic financial markets," the RBI report said. These effects and their interactions would inevitably accentuate the growth slowdown, which started in Q1 of 2018-19 and continued through the first half of 2019-20, it added.

According to the RBI, the global macroeconomic outlook is overcast with the COVID-19 pandemic, with massive dislocations

in global production, supply chains, trade and tourism. Financial markets across the world are experiencing extreme volatility; global commodity prices, especially of crude oil, have declined sharply, it said.

"The impact of COVID-19 on inflation is ambiguous, with a possible decline in food prices likely to be offset by potential cost-push increases in prices of non-food items due to supply disruptions," it said. Taking into account initial conditions, signals from forward-looking surveys and estimates from time series and structural models, CPI inflation is tentatively projected to ease from 4.8 per cent in Q1 of 2020-21 to 4.4 per cent in Q2, 2.7 per cent in Q3 and 2.4 per cent in Q4, the RBI said.

At Mumbai airport, thousands of tonnes of unclaimed cargo in the open

KHUSHBOONARAYAN
MUMBAI, APRIL 9

THE NATIONWIDE lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic has created a capacity crunch at the country's largest cargo terminal at Mumbai International Airport. It currently is being forced to accommodate imported cargo fifty per cent more than its carrying capacity, as importers have not picked up their goods since March 23, sources told *The Indian Express*.

The airport — which has India's largest cold chain storage and a capacity to store about 3,000 metric tonnes of imported goods — is currently accommodating 4,500 metric tonnes of goods, some of which are even lying out in the open next to the aircraft due to space crunch. "The sheds at Sahar Aircargo complex are overflowing," said an official.

The situation prompted Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL) to issue a circular on Tuesday, urging importers and customs brokers to swiftly approach the air cargo complex with documents and collect the cargo immediately after the arrival of the cargo flight. Earlier, importers were allowed to start the collection process only after they received a location number of their shipment after its arrival.

"Due to less clearance and huge storage of import cargo, it will not be possible to assign loca-



The Mumbai airport is currently accommodating 4,500 metric tonnes of goods. Express photo

tion to all landed shipments, hence please don't wait for locations/binning updation in the system, kindly process for the delivery at the earliest," said the MIAL circular. The imported goods that are lying unclaimed include essential pharma and agriculture cargo and non-essential automobile, engineering and electronic goods among others, said sources.

Both the airport authorities and customs officials said the imported goods have completely clogged the air cargo complex. The problem is compounding as on an average, 4-5 freighters have been operating at the airport with average daily imports of 250 tonnes.

"The customs is functioning 24/7 and engaging with stakeholders proactively to clear the consignments at the earliest. But it is proving to be a difficult task. While customs officers are able to reach the place of work with relative ease, the same is not true of other stakeholders, particularly

the contract labour, some of whom may have been migrant and left the city," said Vijay Singh Chauhan, commissioner of customs, Air Cargo Complex.

While the Centre has waived 50 per cent of demurrage charge on exim consignments and the customs is allowing importers to shift cargo to warehouses without paying duties, importers are not keen on moving the goods from the airport. They have cited various reasons including lack of workers, transport and low demand, for delay in collection of imported goods, said sources.

"Perhaps the biggest challenge relates to refrigerated cargo, with only limited storage space and high possibility of spoilage. Most of the imports relate to pharmaceutical companies. Customs is trying to reach out to the importers, offering them all assistance, including delivery of the imported materials and even in warehousing," said Chauhan.

Reserve Bank puts on hold two key HDFC Bank appointments

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 9

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) has put on hold the appointment of Sashidhar Jagdishan and Bhavesh Zaveri as additional directors and executive directors of HDFC Bank, triggering speculation about the successor to Aditya Puri who is scheduled to retire as MD and CEO in October.

"We are now in receipt of a communication dated April 7, 2020 from the RBI stating that since these are important positions in the bank, the bank is advised to examine and submit the proposal after a new MD and CEO assumes charge later this year,"

'Worst fallout since Great Depression'

United Nations: The pandemic sweeping the world will turn global economic growth "sharply negative" in 2020, triggering the worst fallout since the 1930s Great Depression, with only a partial recovery seen in 2021, International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said, painting a far bleaker picture of the social and economic impact of the new coronavirus. **REUTERS**

"... the bank is advised to examine and submit the proposal after a new MD and CEO assumes charge later this year"

HDFC BANK

HDFC Bank said in a stock exchange filing. "The bank should accordingly ensure compliance with Reserve Bank's instruction," the RBI advised the bank.

The RBI move, which came over four months after HDFC Bank submitted the names for clearance, has led to speculation that the successor could be an internal candidate. Both Jagdishan and Zaveri are said to be in the reckon-

ing for the top post at the bank. HDFC Bank recently constituted a search panel to find the successor to Puri. Puri, who built the private lender from scratch since its inception in 1994 and made it the second largest lender with over ₹9 lakh crore assets, is the country's highest paid banker and is retiring on October 26.

"Jagdishan and Zaveri will continue as Additional Directors on the board of the bank till the ensuing annual general meeting, in terms of the relevant provisions of Companies Act, 2013," the filing said. The bank had intimated the RBI about the appointment of Jagdishan and Zaveri as additional directors and executive directors on November 28, 2019.

US Fed rolls out new \$2.3-trn virus rescue plan

REUTERS
WASHINGTON, APRIL 9

THE US Federal Reserve on Thursday rolled out a broad, \$2.3 trillion effort to bolster local governments and small and mid-sized businesses in its latest move to keep the US economy intact as the country battles the coronavirus pandemic. The US central bank said it would work through

banks to offer four-year loans to companies of up to 10,000 employees and directly buy the bonds of states and more populous counties and cities to help them respond to the health crisis.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell said the central bank's role had now broadened beyond its usual focus on keeping markets "liquid" and functional, to helping the US get the economic and financial space it needs to fix a dire emergency.

Incentives for India INX staff amid lockdown

AVINASH NAIR
AHMEDABAD, APRIL 9

DESPITE A 60 per cent dip in trading volumes, India International Exchange (India INX) — the country's first international exchange at GIFT City, Gandhinagar — is planning to incentivise staff members during the annual appraisal cycle, for the risk some of them are taking to come to office during the lockdown to keep the exchange and the data centre functional.

"We have reduced our staff attending office in such a way that only a bare minimum of 3-4 persons... come to the office in one shift," said V Balasubramaniam, MD and CEO, India INX.

FY21 growth likely to be 4.8%: UN report

United Nations: India's GDP growth for the current fiscal is expected to slow down to 4.8 per cent, a UN report has said, warning that COVID-19 is expected to result in significant adverse economic impacts globally. India's GDP growth for the fiscal year 2019-2020 was estimated at 5 per cent and is forecast to slow down to 4.8 per cent for the current fiscal 2020-21. **PTI**

BRIEFLY BoB cuts MCLR by 0.15% across tenors

New Delhi: State-owned Bank of Baroda on Thursday announced to cut marginal cost of funds based lending rate by 0.15 per cent across all tenors, which will bring down cost of consumer loans. **PTI**

Google told to pay copyright fees in France

Paris: France's competition regulator said Thursday Google must start paying media groups for displaying their content, ordering it to begin negotiations after refusing for months to comply with Europe's new digital copyright law. **AFF**

Aurobindo Pharma donates ₹10 cr

New Delhi: Aurobindo Pharma Limited said it has donated an amount of ₹10 crore to the PM-CARES fund, "to strengthen India's resolve to fight against the menace of COVID-19." **ENS**

