

MORE ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE ALLOWED WITH REASONABLE SAFEGUARDS: LETTER

Start big units at 25% capacity, Industry dept tells Home Ministry

‘Resuming work in factories essential to improve economy, provide liquidity’

PRABHA RAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

WITH THE Centre and states considering a two-week extension of the ongoing nationwide lockdown, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Saturday proposed that sectors be allowed to resume operations in a staggered manner.

For labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, automobiles, steel, defence and electronic manufacturing, the department proposed resumption of operations at 20-25 per cent capacity in a single shift initially, provided they follow proper safety precautions.

In an April 11 letter to Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla, DPIIT secretary Guruprasad Mohapatra said that apart from the industries operating as essential services, “certain more activities” should be allowed “with reasonable safeguards” once the government takes a final call on the extension and nature of the lockdown. “These new activities are essential to improve the economic activity and provide liquidity in the hands of the people,” he said in the letter.

When contacted, Mohapatra declined to comment on the letter, but said once sectors are progressively opened up, more could follow. “We have been interacting with many sectors and

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



trade and industry bodies keeping in mind the whole purpose of the lockdown. Keeping in view the need to revive some more sectors along with maintaining safety, security and health, we feel some more sectors can be opened. In any case, the local authority will be in a better position to decide how this should be done,” he told *The Indian Express*.

Keeping with the spirit of ‘jaan bhi, jahaan bhi’ motto the Prime Minister mentioned in his meeting with chief ministers of states, the DPIIT has proposed that certain repairing units like those for mobile, refrigerators, automobiles, air conditioners and television too be allowed. “This will help the citizens under lockdown to avail these critical services and also provide them

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In Dharavi, Mumbai Fire Brigade sprays disinfectant on Sunday. COVID-19 cases have been found in the slum. Prashant Nadkar

Almost 1 in 2 districts hit by virus, exit from lockdown to be tricky

ABANTIKA GHOSH & RAVISH TIWARI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

EVEN AS some states have already announced extension of restrictions for two more weeks, the Centre is learnt to be looking at a lockdown model which allows the states to decide if there is room for relaxation in some areas. However, the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) cases to almost half the total districts in the country - from 284 to 354 districts over the past week - is likely to weigh on the mind of the Central government

CORONA COUNT

8447 CASES **273** DEATHS

765 RECOVERED

1,95,748 samples have been tested as on April 12

in crafting a graded approach. Also, the number of cases is still rising. In the highest single-day spike so far, 918 cases and 31 deaths were reported across the country on Sunday. The total has now gone up to 8,447 cases, of

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Social distancing in Dharavi: 8.5 lakh people holed up in 2.4 sq km

SANDEEP ASHAR
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

“GHARAT RAHA, baaher padu naka (stay indoors, don’t step out),” blares a loudspeaker atop a police vehicle on patrol near Garib Nagar in Dharavi, as several men with hankies tied around their faces stand around in groups of four or five. This is the fifth time that the police have driven down this road in 15 minutes. Their warnings unheeded, the policemen get off and charge with batons raised - and some of the men, scampering towards the lanes of the slum, get it on

the leg. The policemen get back into their vehicle and drive towards another part of Dharavi. Five minutes later, the groups of men are back in the empty streets, defying the lockdown.

Spread over 2.4 sq km, Dharavi, Asia’s largest slum, is home to some 60,000 families and 8.5 lakh people - among the most densely packed human habitations on the planet. Once cases of novel coronavirus infection started appearing here, the density of population sparked fears of community transmission. Ensuring people stay inside the 10 feet-by-10 rooms they

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Over the last week, slight but ‘noticeable’ flattening of growth curve in corona cases

AMITABH SINHA & KARISHMA MEHROTRA
PUNE, NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

JUST AS India prepares to extend its 21-day lockdown period by two more weeks, the first indications have emerged that this measure could indeed be helping in slowing down the spread of COVID-19 disease in the country.

Scientists have observed a slight, but “noticeable”, flattening of the growth curve starting April 6, an indication that the reduced contact between people as a result of the lockdown could be showing its desired effect.

If the trend continues, it could result in a significantly lower number of infections in the coming days, an analysis of disease data by Soumya Easwaran and Sitabhra Sinha at Chennai’s Institute of Mathematical Sciences shows. Sinha told *The Indian Express* his projections show that by April 20, less than 20,000 people would be infected by the disease. In the absence of any impact of the lockdown, this number

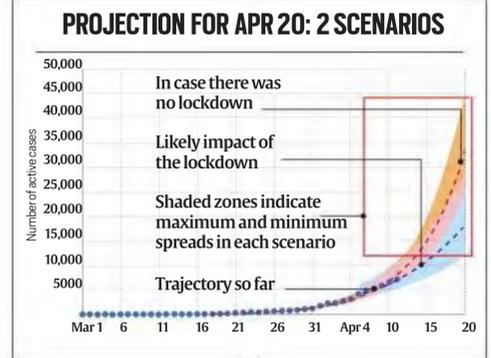
could have been around 35,000. India had close to 8,400 positive cases on April 11, almost exactly double of what it was on April 5.

Sinha said as a result of this slowdown in the spread, the reproduction number for the disease between April 6 and April 11 was significantly lower than that for the entire period of the outbreak in India, starting March 4. Reproduction number refers to the average number of people who get infected by an already-infected person.

According to calculations by Sinha’s team, every infected person is estimated to have passed on the disease to another 1.83 persons on an average since the outbreak began. However, between April 6 and April 11, this number is estimated to be only 1.55.

“It is still too early to say this for sure, but it is possible that this reduction in the growth rate of the disease is the result of the lockdown,” Sinha said, adding these trends were not final and could change.

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New cases increasingly in single digits, how Kerala managed to buck the national trend

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 12

KERALA SAW just two new positive cases of the novel coronavirus infection on Sunday, continuing to buck the trend of rapidly increasing numbers of cases in several states. On six of the last 10 days beginning April 3, the state, which has several identified hotspots of the disease, has seen only single-digit increases in the numbers of daily new cases.

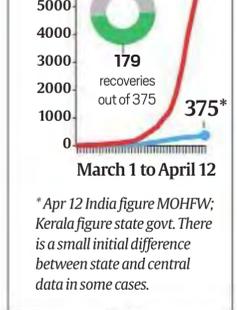
The recovery rate of positive cases too, has been higher in Kerala compared to other states and the national average. A record number of 36 patients were cured/discharged on Sunday, taking the number of recoveries to 179, which is almost 48 per cent of the total 375 cases since the beginning of the outbreak, according to state government data.

All-India numbers posted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (which lag behind the numbers provided by state governments by some time) on Sunday evening showed 8,447 cases and 765 cured/discharged, a much lower

recovery rate of about 9 per cent.

Maharashtra had more recovered cases than Kerala (208 as opposed to 142, according to Union Health Ministry data), but at 1,761, it has also had almost five times as many cases as

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* Apr 12 India figure MOHFW; Kerala figure state govt. There is a small initial difference between state and central data in some cases.

In March, people hoarded cash, withdrew four times more than monthly average

SANDEEP SINGH & GEORGE MATHEW
NEW DELHI, MUMBAI, APRIL 12

AS INDIA imposed a lockdown to fight COVID-19, people withdrew almost four times more cash from bank branches and ATMs than they did on an average every month in financial

year 2019-20.

Currency with public jumped by Rs 86,000 crore to an all-time high of Rs 23,41,851 crore in March 2020. While it increased by Rs 52,541 crore in the fortnight-ended March 13 just ahead of the commencement of restrictions by individual states, it rose by Rs 33,539 crore more over the next fortnight till March 27.

Data from the Reserve Bank of India shows that the average monthly increase in currency with public stood at Rs 23,895 crore. During 2019-20, the currency with public increased 14 per cent or Rs 2,86,741 crore to Rs 23,41,851 crore.

According to the RBI, currency with the public is arrived

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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

APRIL'S CRUEL DILEMMA
BY ARUNA SUNDARARAJAN
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U.S. TOLL TOPS 21,000, HIGHEST GLOBALLY

ON FREE TESTS, CENTRE ASSURES PVT LABS: WILL TAKE UP MATTER IN SC

IN MUSSOORIE, IAS OFFICERS GET TRAINING IN TACKLING VIRUS
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Stopped at lockdown barricade in Punjab, men chop off cop's hand

NAVJEEVAN GOPAL
CHANDIGARH, APRIL 12

A GROUP of five men from the Nihang sect attacked policemen and officials in Patiala early Sunday and chopped off the hand of an Assistant Sub-Inspector after being asked to show curfew passes at a lockdown barricade.



The site of the clash in Patiala. Harmeet Sodhi

Three other policemen and a Punjab Mandi Board official were injured in the attack after police stopped the mini-SUV in which the group was travelling near a vegetable market on the Sanaur-Patiala road.

Police said the attackers crashed the vehicle into the barricade, charged out wielding sharp-edged weapons, and

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From UP to Maharashtra, farmers say problem not in the field but in market

HARISH DAMODARAN & PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS
NEW DELHI, PUNE, APRIL 12

IN EARLY November, the district administration of Chandauli in eastern Uttar Pradesh banned harvester combines, citing a state government order to prevent burning of *parali* (leftover straw) from the paddy cut by these machines. Panic-stricken farmers approached the district magistrate, who relented after obtaining an assurance that they would not burn any standing stubble later.

But the permission came late: Harvesting could start only by early-December, against the normal time from mid-November. And with heavy rains on December 11-13, the crop suffered extensive damage.

Now, as Chandauli’s farmers harvest wheat amid the lockdown, *parali* and air pollution is



Harvesting in progress in Chandauli, UP. Express

hardly a priority. “Harvesting won’t be a problem. My district alone has over 100 combines, with an equal number coming from outside. We have some 2,30,000 acres under wheat, nearly three-fourths of which is combine-harvested and the rest manually using sickles. Each machine can do 35-40 acres over 18 hours daily,” says Ajay Kumar Singh, a 42-year-old farmer from Emiliya village in Chandauli.

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PAGE 1 ANCHOR

Three weeks and counting: Stranded and hungry at shut gateway

An estimated 2100 trucks, their drivers and helpers are stuck at Petrapole in West Bengal on the India-Bangladesh border

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA
PETRAPOLE (WEST BENGAL), APRIL 12

DRIVING A truck carrying a consignment of Bangladesh-ordered truck chassis from Alwar, Sunil Sharma reached Satberia near Petrapole, the Indian border land port in West Bengal, on March 23, a day before the national lockdown kicked in. He has been there ever since.

For three weeks now, the

truck has been his home. The 42-year-old from Haryana, who found space for his truck in a private parking lot off Jessore Road at Satberia in Bongaon in North

24 Parganas, cooks and eats beneath the truck and then crawls into the cabin to rest.

He has made new friends - drivers Prem Chand who carted machinery from Faridabad, and Kamlesh Yadav who had to deliver industrial magnets across the border. Short of cash, they now settle for a meal a day, at times dipping rotis in tea.

“I am running out of money. When I called my employer for my salary, he told me to borrow money from home for now. How



Trucks wait at Satberia in Bongaon near Petrapole. Partha Paul

can I do that? I am supposed to be the one sending money home,” Sharma said.

They are not alone. An estimated 2100 trucks are stuck near Petrapole, the largest land port in the country. The border crossing is closed, and they are unable to drop their consignments at the warehouses in Benapole across the border.

While exporters have been urging the Centre to allow unloading for subsequent passage of goods, clearing agents, workers and even drivers are scared to step inside Bangladesh which too is fighting the coronavirus. Local Trinamool Congress lead-

ers, enforcing the lockdown, have been warning against any movement of trucks and goods.

In parking lots, and on both sides of the Jessore Road leading to the land port, trucks have taken up all available space. BSF personnel stand guard 500 metres from Petrapole, and a local municipal team, armed with thermal scanners, is busy checking people for fever symptoms.

The Integrated Check Post is almost deserted. Only Bangladesh citizens with valid passports can go past the border gates, returning home on foot.

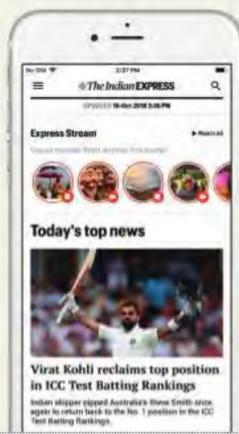
On a normal day, 500-550 trucks make it to Benapole while

100-150 trucks from Bangladesh enter Petrapole to unload their cargo. All that stopped three weeks ago.

Through this land port, India exports cotton fabrics, vehicle chassis, non-alloy steel, yarn, iron and steel products, synthetic fibres, two-wheelers, jute seeds, machinery parts, books and paper, cereals and other food products. And from Bangladesh come consignments of jute, ready-made garments, betel nut, rice bran and other products.

Trade volume via Petrapole, according to statistics of the Land Ports Authority of India,

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WEB EXCLUSIVE

DOORSTEP DELIVERY OF ESSENTIALS

With an extension of the lockdown by two weeks, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike on Sunday launched a dedicated helpline number to ensure essentials are delivered at the doorsteps to the residents.

VIDEO OF THE DAY



SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR
In conversation with Anant Goenka, Executive Director, Indian Express Group

EXPLAINED



CAN CORONAVIRUS DAMAGE THE BRAIN?
Neurological symptoms can be seen in a "notable proportion" of people

EXPRESS AUDIO

How the Bhilwara model of containment works

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

Today on the 3 Things podcast, we look at how Bhilwara managed to curb the spread of the virus and the challenges it faced along the way

FROM PAGE ONE

Flattening curve

"The growth curve for Maharashtra appeared to be bending a little (showing signs of a slowdown) around April 6, but now we can see that it was a minor blip. The state with the largest number of cases is still experiencing an exponential growth of cases," he said.

On the other hand, Telangana with about 970 cases on April 11, was still showing a linear growth in cases, possibly because its expansion was based mainly on a very wide base comprising a large number of people who had attended the Tablighi Jamaat event in Delhi last month.

The estimated slowdown could come as a justification for the government to extend the lockdown in a bid to further reduce the growth of the spread. The slowdown does not mean the beginning of the end of the disease in India. It does not even mean that the number of people testing positive for the virus would begin to fall immediately. All that the slowdown implies is the rate at which the virus was spreading would slow down.

Besides the reproduction number, there is another indicator that seems to be providing some comfort to the scientists. The positivity rate — or the proportion of people testing positive against the total number of tests being conducted — has remained more or less static despite an increase in the number of tests.

Since April 3, which had seen an abnormal spike in the positivity rate possibly as a fallout of the Tablighi Jamaat event, this number has continued to hover around 4 per cent, meaning two in every 50 tests is positive.

"Positivity rate can give you a sense of how widespread the disease is, assuming that a substantial number of people are being tested. We've now reached roughly 16,000 to 17,000 tests per day, which is pretty good. But we need to see where it stabilises on an average. If we are testing more and the positivity rate remains the same, it's a clue that the infection is where it is, and is not expanding per se. If you see that it suddenly goes up, that's something that could be worrisome," said Tarun Bhatnagar, a scientist at ICMR and National Institute of Epidemiology, Chennai.

Just like it is with the reproduction number, scientists warn against reading too much into the positivity rate as well, sensitive as it is to the number of tests being conducted. "This (positivity rate) is an indicator of an increase in disease spread but also focused testing and better contact tracing," Tavpritesh Sethi, computational biologist at IIT Delhi, said. "But testing should be ramped up to create another stabilisation," he said.

On April 9, ICMR had said that the positivity rate in testing over the last one to two months had not changed substantially, between 3 per cent and 5 per cent. An examination from March 18 to April 11 of the positivity rate — or the proportion of positive cases to the number of tests — shows that the rate has fluctuated in the range 1.1 per cent to 4.1 per cent.

April 3 was an exception when the rate was 4.68 per cent. That day, as reported by The Indian Express, the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi accounted for one-fifth of the COVID-19 positive cases nationwide.

On April 9, ICMR changed its

testing strategy to include asymptomatic people who were direct and high-risk contacts of a confirmed case. In hotspots and large migration gatherings, the strategy was expanded even further to all influenza-like, symptomatic people with a fever, cough, sore throat, or runny nose.

Bhatnagar added that one person may be tested multiple times, skewing the positivity rate. ICMR has released data on tested individuals sporadically.

On April 2, ICMR released an interim advisory for using rapid antibody tests for COVID-19 in hotspot areas. On April 4, they released a final advisory for using these tests on symptomatic, influenza-like illnesses. Rapid antibody tests do not give confirmed results and therefore, are not included in data about positive cases.

Lockdown exit

which 273 have died while 764 recovered.

According to the Health Ministry's latest data, there has been a substantial rise in the number of districts with over 10 cases — from 86 to 126 over the past week. Of these, the number of districts with 11-100 cases has gone up from 81 to 116; and those with over 100 cases has doubled from five to 10 districts. In the same period, the number of districts with up to 10 cases has increased from 199 to 228.

The 70 new districts where COVID-19 cases have been reported are spread across 17 states: Uttar Pradesh (13 new districts), Punjab (8), Maharashtra (7), Rajasthan (6), Telangana (6), Gujarat (5) and Haryana (5) are among the states where at least five new districts have been affected.

At Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video conference with chief ministers on Saturday, several states had pushed for resumption of some economic activities in regions with no COVID-19 cases.

"After the three-week lockdown is over (on April 14), it is clear that some things will have to be done. Production will have to open enough to maintain supply of essential goods. There are also thoughts on allowing relaxations in the 'very safe' areas. But, if that is done, the onus of identifying those areas will be on the states, because they are the ones doing the containment on the ground, and they know which are those areas. Also, the numbers and spread are changing every day; more than a top-down effort is required (so) that the states are given more room," said a top government source.

There is a sense in the government that giving states more room may not actually make a big difference on the ground as no state, at this point, can afford to opt for a "thoughtless" relaxation and then bear the burden of a spike in cases.

Another option being considered is easing restrictions for harvesting work and movement of goods, as demanded by many states. The Home Ministry has already issued directions to allow goods movement, regardless of whether they are covered in the essential list or not.

"Any substantive change in terms of allowing people to move around does not seem to be a good idea at this time. It will have to wait till the end of the month," said another source.

The focus is now on ramping up testing capacity. Joint

Resuming activities essential

cash liquidity, which is required very much. Also, these services do not lead to any crowding. E-commerce entities providing such repair services may also be allowed," the letter said.

The DPIIT secretary also said that micro, small and medium enterprises with export commitments "need to be allowed to operate with minimal manpower and necessary movement of material". He also suggested that "big" companies in textiles, automobiles and electronic manufacturing that follow "proper sanitation and distancing norms" be allowed to start operating at 20-25 percent ca-

capacity in a single shift "to start with".

Ancillaries catering to essential industries like pharmaceuticals and healthcare may also be allowed to operate. This includes certain segments of the rubber industry and those producing medical equipment like gloves, hospital rubber sheets, medical devices, catheters, anaesthesia bags and ventilator bellows.

"Timber, plywood and wood based industry provides packaging material to pharma companies, FMCG and other companies producing essential commodities. These should also be allowed by the state authorities," the letter

said.

Among other sectors that should be allowed to resume operations "with minimum manpower", the letter listed makers of telecom equipment and components, steel and ferrous alloy mills, power looms, cement plants, all types of food and beverages, plastic manufacturing units, big and organised gems and jewellery sector units, automotive units and all SEZs and EOUs.

Mohapatra stressed that transport vehicles of all sizes, whether inter-state, intra-state or intra-city, need to be allowed by all enforcement agencies "without asking any question".

Industries allowed to operate would have to ensure safety measures like single entry points for workers, sufficient space to ensure social distancing, use of separate transport for ferrying workers or arrangements for their stay and "high quality" regular sanitisation of the premises, the letter noted. "State and district authorities, while allowing these activities, should ensure strict observance of these conditions," it said.

The letter was written following "very detailed interaction" of Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal with various states and industry bodies.

How Kerala bucked the national corona trend

Kerala. As of Sunday evening, according to central government data, Kerala accounted for more than 18 per cent of the total recoveries in the country, while contributing to a little more than 4 per cent of the total number of cases.

Until March 26, Kerala had the largest number of positive cases in India, following by Maharashtra. In the days since then, the theatre of COVID-19 has shifted to other states. New hotspots with a sudden spurt in cases have emerged elsewhere in the country, even as the emergence of new cases in Kerala has progressed slowly.

Kerala Health Department officials said the growth trajectory of COVID-19 has hit a slope for over a week now. "The peak period was in the last 10 days of March, marked by cases of persons with travel history. They returned from abroad in large numbers from hotspots of the infection abroad. Now, mainly their contacts are showing up as positive. These contacts are mostly close family members of those with travel history," an official said.

According to this official, there is no indication of community spread of the disease at the places identified as hotspots. "The infection in Kerala has been so far confined to persons with travel history and their contacts, under home quarantine. As the general incubation period of those returned from abroad is almost

DAILY NEW CASES

Date	Kerala	India
April 1	24	357
April 2	21	504
April 3	9	500
April 4	11	713
April 5	8	566
April 6	13	526
April 7	9	554
April 8	9	674
April 9	12	722
April 10	7	756
April 11	10	768
April 12	2	918

over, now the focus is on their primary contacts. The testing of samples from all contacts in the high-risk category are expected to be completed in a week. However, we haven't lowered the vigil and are working with the realisation that there is a chance of community spread or spike in cases at any time," the official said.

Of the 375 cases reported since January 30, as many as 233 have a history of travel, according to state government data. Seven foreign tourists tested positive in Kerala, and 19 positive cases are those of individuals who attended the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in New Delhi's Nizamuddin area in the middle of March. The remaining are locally infected cases or primary contacts.

Only two people have died

from the disease in Kerala so far. A third death that took place in a Kannur hospital on Saturday is of a 71-year-old man from the enclave of Mahe, which, though geographically located in Kerala, is part of the Union Territory of Puducherry. Saturday's victim had no travel history.

In Thiruvananthapuram district, where a 68-year-old died on March 31, authorities had feared community spread. But even though the source of his infection has not been traced so far, no fresh cases have been reported in the places where he had socialised. The patient's suspected sources of contact too, have tested negative.

Data from the districts of Kasaragod and Kannur, which together account for 63 per cent of cases in Kerala as of Sunday evening, are encouraging. In Kannur, out of 71 cases, 36 have been discharged. In Kasaragod, these numbers are 166 and 61, respectively. That means, 41 per cent of positive cases from these districts together have been cured.

In both districts, the cases were clustered in a few locations, which made containment more effective. Around 90 per cent of the positive cases in these two districts had returned from Dubai, mainly from the COVID-19 hotspot of Naif. Locally transmitted cases are family members of these arrivals from abroad.

In Kasaragod district, 20

contacts of a positive case with travel history have been infected. In Kannur district, eight members of a family have been infected the same manner. Several villages and urban centres in these districts have been virtually sealed and lockdown steps have been increased, completely blocking people from moving out of homes.

In other 11 districts in Kerala, COVID-19 cases came down to either zero or in single digit as on Sunday. Alkesh Kumar Sharma, special officer for COVID-19 control in Kasaragod, tweeted Friday, "Kasaragod is showing results due to effective lockdown, efficient public health and medical teams, cluster containment and smart isolation and quarantine strategies... and a proactive public support to defeat COVID."

On the encouraging number of recoveries, an official said: "A lot of factors contribute to the fast recovery of a COVID-19 patient. The age of the patient, severity of symptoms, and the virus load are critical elements. All over the country, the treatment protocol suggested by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is followed diligently. We have to study the fast recovery scenario in Kerala." As per the state data, 82 per cent of the positive cases fall within the age bracket of 20-60, and a majority of the patients are in the working age category.

Such an effect on the supply chain occurs when changes in consumer demand prompts companies to order more goods to meet new demand.

Farmers

Singh has planted wheat on 40 acres and summer moong (green gram) on 12 acres, which will be harvested from May, but his worry isn't over harvesting. The authorities have issued passes for the combines and their operators — typically one foreman, two drivers and two helpers. "The grain will get cut, but we don't know how it would be marketed. Wheat procurement is usually from around April 10. This time, it may not be before May," he says.

Echoing the concern is Rao Gulab Singh Lodhi from Nanhegaon village in Madhya Pradesh's Narsinghpur district. He began harvesting his 36 acres of wheat last Wednesday, after having finished with chana (chickpea) and masur (red lentil) on 8 acres each in early March.

"My chana and masur is harvested, cleaned and graded for quality. But I cannot sell, as the APMC (agricultural produce market committee) mandi at Karakbel is closed and there's nobody to buy," says Lodhi. While procurement in MP is slated to start from April 15 — a delay of over 15 days — he isn't sure if that would help.

"The government has declared that it will not purchase more than 13 quintals per acre of wheat from any farmer, and 5 quintals each of chana and masur. My own average per-acre yield is 20 quintals in wheat, 12 quintals in masur and 10 quintals in chana. What do I do with the remaining crop? They want us to increase productivity, but are unwilling to procure our extra grain," says Lodhi.

The story isn't different in onions, where around 30 labourers are required to harvest one acre in a single day. For Santosh Gorade, a farmer from Takli Vinchur village in Maharashtra's Nashik district, that isn't an issue. "There are enough labourers in my village. Although the ones in nearby villages may not be able to come due to the lockdown, I can stagger my harvesting," he says.

Gorade plans to harvest his rabi onion on two out of his total 6-acre holding after April 20. Eknath Sanap, from Naigaon village in Nashik's Sinnar taluka, harvested 200 quintals from 1.5 out of his 3 acres last week. He did not find it difficult to get labour, which is largely local.

For both farmers, the primary concern is marketing. Rabi onions are amenable to storage in 'kanda chavlis'. Farmers generally keep the crop harvested in March-April in these on-field raised platform structures — to prevent moisture ingress that cause the bulbs to sprout — and sell in tranches till September-October. "Yes, I can take it to the market later. But what if after lockdown, everybody rushes to sell and the prices crash?" asks Sanap.

Currently, the APMC mandis of Lasalgaon and Pimpalgaon in Nashik are functioning with skeletal staff. Unlike in farms, the labourers at these two big wholesale onion markets — those who unload, clean, bag and reload produce — are mostly from UP and Bihar, who have gone back due to the lockdown.

Availability of labour for farm work doesn't seem a constraint in sugarcane. According to Jitender Singh Hooda, an 8-acre farmer from Kheri Baiagi village of western UP's Shamli district and tehsil, a skilled labourer can harvest, bundle and load 12-14 quintals of cane daily, for which he charges Rs 45/quintal. Four of them can, thus, deliver a full tractor trolley-load of 55-56 quintals for just over Rs 2,500.

The same job — of only harvesting and bundling 12-14 quintals — can also be done by three

unskilled labourers. At a daily wage rate of Rs 350, it works out to Rs 4,200 for 56 quintals, plus another Rs 800 for loading on to the farmer's trolley. "There's no dearth of labour now, especially the people who have lost their jobs after lockdown. But they have little experience in cane cultivation," says Hooda.

Hooda's workforce includes Rakesh, a ladies tailor; Vinod, an electrician; Manoj, a construction labourer; and Krishan Pal, a mender of old jute bags — all previously working in Shamli, Kamal and nearby towns. Technically more "skilled" than farm hands, they are now being engaged for sugarcane planting as well. Hooda estimates the cost of planting one acre using skilled workers at Rs 4,200. The same with the new less productive persons comes to Rs 6,000 or so, "but at least my work gets done".

Stranded

was Rs 21,380 crore in 2018-19. In the next financial year, up to June 2019-20, that volume was worth Rs 4859.18 crore. In 2018-19, as many as 163,555 vehicles crossed the land port and the passenger count was 23,54,962.

As soon as the lockdown was announced, all drivers already at Benapole were told to leave their trucks and return to the Indian side. It was the same with Bangladeshi drivers. They too returned, leaving their vehicles. There are 100 loaded Indian trucks across the border while 30 Bangladeshi trucks are at Petrapole.

Ajay Sahai, Director General and CEO, Federation of Indian Export Organisations, told The Indian Express over phone: "We stand with the nation and the central and state governments at this time, fighting COVID-19. However, we have written to Chairman of Land Ports Authority and other agencies in India. As per orders and notifications of the government, ports — land, sea, air — and related activities and movement of cargo trucks to and from ports have been categorized under essential services. But in Petrapole, there is no movement. Already there are delays and cancellations of orders. The little orders we have, these have to be executed and all agencies should pitch in."

From his home in Bongaon, Kartick Chakraborty, secretary of Petrapole Clearing Agents Staffs' Welfare Association, said: "There were meetings held with all stakeholders, including Customs, BSF, Immigration, warehousing, exporters, labour unions, clearing agents and others. Immigration banned movement on foot to Bangladesh side.

Second, drivers and labourers are scared that if they come in close contact with people across the border, there are chances of COVID-19 infection. If a driver enters Bangladesh, he will be quarantined for 14 days. When he returns to India, he will again be quarantined for 14 days. All this has led to the logjam. There should be a proper medical team at the port. Nothing is moving here." The association has also written to the West Bengal Chief Secretary, seeking a medical unit for the land port.

Pradipt Kumar Dey, an exporter in Bongaon, said: "The entire business chain will be hurt since the trucks are stranded. For instance, we deal in jute seeds. There are over 50 trucks with more than 1,000 tonnes of jute seeds stuck on the Indian side. Bangladeshi farmers just have a little over a week to sow them. If the seeds do not reach in time, jute cultivation in Bangladesh will be hit. Bangladesh supplies jute to mills in India, and these will be hit. Lakhs of jute mill workers will be affected. All agencies should allow us to export and end the logjam."

FULL REPORTS ON
www.indianexpress.com

CLARIFICATIONS & CORRECTIONS

ON 11.04.2020, PAGE 5

RESPONDING TO the report 'ICMR asks 13 institutions to help increase corona testing', Maj Gen Vibha Dutta, Director and CEO, AIIMS Nagpur, has written to say it is AIIMS Nagpur, and not AIIMS Pune as mentioned in the report, which is one of the 13 mentor institutions designated by the ICMR. The error is regretted.

3 THE OUTBREAK THE CITY

TACKLING COVID-19

Red and orange: Capital will code areas based on severity of spread

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

COVID-19 CLUSTERS in the city will now be colour-coded into red and orange, based on the severity of the outbreak, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Sunday, announcing the Delhi government's plan to carry out a sanitisation drive in those areas.

Kejriwal said the government will notify more areas as containment zones in the next few days. The government Saturday had notified 33 such zones in Delhi, where stricter lockdown measures are being enforced, effectively making large chunks of the population out of bounds from the rest of the city. Ten more areas were added to the list on Sunday.

"Our experiment in Dilshad Garden, where we had sealed the area and carried out 'Operation SHIELD', has succeeded. We have identified many more areas to be notified as containment zones. I under-

10 NEW CONTAINMENT ZONES ADDED

- Gali Number 5 and 5A, H-2 Block, Bengali Colony Mahavir Enclave
- House number 811-829, 842-835, Khadda Colony, Jaitpur Extension Part II
- #1144-1134, 618-623, Khadda Colony, Jaitpur Extension Part II
- Gali no. 16, Kachhi Colony, Madanpur Khadar Extension
- Mehela Mohala,
- Madanpur Khadar
- H-Block, Near Umra Masjid, Abu Fazl Enclave
- E-Block, Abu Fazl Enclave
- #97-107, 120-127, Kailash Hills, East of Kailash
- E-Block, # 284-294, East of Kailash
- # 53-55 and 25, Shera Mohalla, Garhi, East of Kailash

stand that residents of those areas are facing a lot of difficulties. But we don't want a situation like US, where over 2,000 deaths were recorded in the last 24 hours," said Kejriwal.

While the CM didn't elaborate further on the plan, senior district officials said the containment zones have been classified as red while the buffer zones — which are the areas bordering the con-

tainment clusters — have been coded orange. These areas are also under enhanced surveillance.

The sanitisation drive, Kejriwal said, will cover both types of clusters. The orange zones have been as termed as high-risk zones by experts, he added. For the purpose of sanitisation, 10 advanced Japanese machines are being deployed apart from 50 smaller machines



CM Arvind Kejriwal at the press briefing, Sunday

of the Delhi Jal Board (DJB).

The Japanese machines have been provided by a private firm free of cost, Kejriwal said. Each machine has the capacity to sanitise 20,000 square metres per hour.

The CM also said the transport department will start accepting applications from drivers of public service vehicles such as autos, e-rickshaws, taxis, gramin sewas among others for extending a one-time financial assistance of Rs 5,000.

The amount will be transferred to the Aadhaar-linked bank accounts of public service vehicle badge holders. The applicants will have to furnish their PSV badge numbers, driving licence numbers, mobile numbers and Aadhaar numbers linked with bank accounts to get the benefit. The portal will begin functioning on April 13.

The CM added that around 23 lakh people not holding valid ration cards have applied for ration so far.

Delhi wants to test more, but where are the kits?

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

THE NUMBER of COVID-19 'containment zones' is growing in Delhi — it stood at 43 on Sunday — but the unavailability of rapid antibody testing kits continues to keep the scope of testing limited, interrupting CM Arvind Kejriwal's plan to emulate the South Korean model of mass testing.

Reports from several districts in the national capital suggest that authorities are so far not in a position to scale up testing, even at the 43 containment zones — clusters with stricter restrictions on movement to contain the spread of COVID-19.

As per the April 12 health bulletin, government labs, including the ones in Centre-run AIIMS and RML, have undertaken 11,519 tests and private labs 2,517. In government labs, 1,022 have tested positive, while results of 941 samples are pending. Among the samples at private labs, 132 have tested positive and 43 are pending. In all these cases, the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) direct tests have been carried out.

In East Delhi, 2,757 people residing in the district's nine containment zones have been "medically examined" so far. However, there was no official word on how many have been tested, apart from the contacts of confirmed cases and those with symptoms of flu (influenza-like-illnesses).

In South Delhi, 10-15 persons in each of the three containment zones have undergone testing, DM (south) B M Mishra said.

Mishra, himself a doctor, also said that rapid testing in itself may not be able to map the spread of the virus accurately. "Rapid antibody tests will tell you if a person has developed antibodies or not. Through that, you will know whether a person has contracted the virus or not.

WHAT ARE ANTIBODY TESTS

New Delhi: Antibody tests involve taking blood samples to see if a person has developed antibodies against the virus. The presence of antibodies would mean the person may have developed resistance to the virus, if not complete immunity. This happens to be a faster alternative to the direct PCR tests, under which throat or nasal swabs are taken. The tests would throw up instances of people who may have been infected by the virus in the past but never diagnosed. This would help authorities assess the spread of the virus.

However, to be sure if the virus is active or not one needs to test whether the antibody developed is immunoglobulin M or immunoglobulin G. Only the presence of the latter will show that a person has overcome the virus," Mishra explained.

Officials of the West district said they have completed screening of residents of all three containment zones. "We did not find anyone symptomatic. Only family members of those who tested positive have been tested so far. Community testing is likely to begin on Monday," said an official.

Central district authorities said they have begun screening and testing across the three densely populated clusters in Chandni Mahal, Nabi Karim and Sadar Bazar. However, consolidated data was not immediately available.

The government also shared that in the Southeast district, 2,010 houses covering a population of 8,499; 220 houses with

1,300 people in South and 2,800 households with 250,00 people in North districts have been "surveyed by medical teams".

On April 7, Kejriwal had announced that testing in Delhi would be made more aggressive along the lines of the South Korea model. This, the CM said, would enable the government to identify the hotspot areas of the COVID-19 outbreak and take necessary action.

The April 4 ICMR advisory on testing, which has been adopted by the Union Health Ministry, advises rapid antibody testing only for those with symptomatic influenza-like-illnesses in containment zones. The containment zone orders also reflect that, with emphasis on "screening of each and every person", and enforcement of other medical regulations and check up, steering clear of any specific emphasis on random testing.

However, the Delhi government had planned to begin random testing, not limiting the collection of samples only from those showing cold or flu symptoms. Accordingly, an order for 1 lakh testing kits was placed with an ICMR-approved vendor, which were to be delivered beginning April 9. Government sources said they have not received the kits so far.

For now, teams of the administration are carrying out a door-to-door survey in the containment zones to find out ill symptomatic cases; people who may have come in touch with confirmed patients, or attendees of the Nizamuddin Markaz congregation, among others.

"Residents are being watched and have been told to reach out as soon as they develop influenza symptoms. Size of the containment zones is also very limited, in most cases, a lane with a few families," said Mishra. Rapid kits have not yet reached the district.



Easter mass livestreamed

New Delhi: With video calls and live streaming of service, the Christian community in the city celebrated Easter on Sunday amidst the lockdown. "We don't want people to get affected due to the virus. Our families helped us with the video calls and live streaming. It was a good experience," said Father Savarimuthu, spokesperson of the Catholic Archdiocese of Delhi. Similar masses were conducted by pastors from St Thomas Church and St Teresa Church too.

3.5-magnitude earthquake hits capital

New Delhi: Tremors with "rumbling noises" were felt in the capital around 5.45pm Sunday when an earthquake of 3.5 magnitude was recorded with East Delhi's Sonia Vihar as its epicentre. There was no damage to life and property reported, a Delhi Police official said. The focal depth of the earthquake was 8 kilometres. Last perceptible earthquake of 3.5 magnitude was experienced in the city on April 24, 2018. **ENS**



Shelter home residents wait near the Yamuna Sunday after a fire gutted three porta cabins in Kashmere Gate. Prem Nath Pandey

Day after fire, hundreds wait in the open as govt rushes to arrange shelter

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

A DAY after a fire gutted three shelter homes in Kashmere Gate, hundreds of homeless people remained stranded along the Yamuna, waiting for the authorities to find them alternative accommodation Sunday. While government officials said they will be shifted to other locations in North Delhi, many were seen waiting by the riverbank.

N H Sharma, director (night shelter) at DUSIB, said, "We are trying to shift the people to nearby schools. Arrangements

have been made and over a hundred men will be shifted to a school in Chabi Ganj tomorrow. Till then, food packets will be given to homeless people."

A Delhi Police spokesperson said that seven men from the shelters that were burnt down yesterday have been sent to 14-day judicial custody. DCP (North) Monika Bharadwaj said, "A case has been registered under sections of rioting, damaging public property and assault."

Police suspect the incident was a result of rumours spread to incite people.

A day before the fire, residents at the shelter and civil defence

volunteers had clashed over distribution of food. Though DUSIB employees and the caretaker alleged a group of agitated men attacked the volunteers, several shelter inmates had complained that the volunteers allegedly manhandled them, forcing one of them to "jump in the canal".

Later, a body was found along the river — while police said this was unrelated to the shelters, the discovery of the body riled occupants, leading to stone pelting.

"The body is not of anyone from the shelter as nobody here is missing," said Nishu Tripathi, in-charge at the shelter.

Veeralpal, a civil defence vol-

unteer, said, "For the last two weeks, there have been clashes over food and space. After the lockdown was announced, authorities shifted hundreds of men here. Though we get donations, fights do break out."

"It all happened within five minutes and volunteers escaped the fire while also helping a few residents who were inside. We have collected evidence to ascertain the cause of the fire. We suspect it was a rumour some men spread to incite others," said a senior police officer.

Based on the evidence, police suspect the men used kitchen items to torch the three cabins.

MAHENDER SINGH
MANRAL
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

DESPITE THE investigation into the Northeast Delhi communal riots hitting hurdles during the lockdown, more than 800 arrests have been made, after the Home Ministry asked Delhi Police to ensure the probe does not slow down. The MHA directive came after some teams of the Crime Branch started working from home and stopped visiting the Northeast district, where they had set up a camp office during the probe. The pace of arrests had also slowed down.

"But the situation changed two weeks ago when a meeting was called by senior MHA officials to discuss preparation by the Delhi Police during the lockdown. During the meeting, they were also asked about progress in the riots cases. Police chief S N Shrivastava apprised them of the situation, and MHA insisted that police must continue making arrests under any circumstances," said a highly placed source.

A message was conveyed to all investigation teams to resume



The riots in Northeast Delhi left 53 dead. Praveen Khanna

the probe and make arrests. The Indian Express has learnt that 802 arrests have been made so far. The crime branch, probing 42 murder cases, has made 182 arrests, while the Northeast district police has arrested 620 people in connection with the riots. Out of the 182 arrested, 50 were nabbed during the lockdown.

On Thursday too, an investigation team probing murder cases connected to the violence in Dayalpur visited the house of a suspect. But minutes later, they had to rush out and sanitise themselves as the suspect's father

had high fever and cough.

Police said teams have been told to take precautions before making any arrest or carrying out a raid, and that personal protective equipment kits have been provided to them.

"They have been asked to carry temperature guns. After detaining suspects, teams provide them masks and sanitisers. They are then taken for a screening test before being produced before a magistrate," said an officer.

On the arrests, police sources said: "Earlier, three-four murder cases were registered in one FIR; now, separate FIRs have been registered for every case. The Crime Branch has also arrested two more persons from Uttarakhand's Sambhal in connection with IB staffer Ankit Sharma's murder for providing shelter to the murder accused."

On investigation into the death of 24-year-old Faizan — who was seen lying injured on the ground in a video which also has men in police gear telling him and four others to sing the national anthem — police said the SIT is looking into the role of the paramilitary force as no one from Delhi Police was deployed there.

Man jumps to death from quarantine facility

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NOIDA, APRIL 12

A 32-YEAR-OLD man died after jumping from the 7th floor balcony of a quarantine facility in Greater Noida on Sunday evening. According to police, the incident took place around 8 pm. The man was declared brought dead at the nearest hospital.

"He had not tested positive for coronavirus; his samples had been taken and results were awaited. No suicide letter or note has been found and we are ascertaining exact cause for the step. We have cordoned off the area and medical officials have asked other residents to stay indoors," said Rakesh Kumar Singh, DCP Zone 3.

According to police, the man

had been shifted to the Galgotias University hostel, where an isolation ward has been set up consisting of more than 200 beds, last week. He had earlier been taken to Gautam Buddha University for quarantine after cases in his locality were reported and he was among those found symptomatic, officials said. The man lived with his family in Noida's Phase 3, officials said.

A magisterial enquiry has been set up and a report will be submitted to the district magistrate within 24 hours. Police are looking into claims by some people at the quarantine facility that the victim had been feeling lonely as he was away from his family.

No new cases have been reported in the last three days, and the number of positive cases in the district stands at 64.



FLU CORNER

A 24x7 makeshift "flu-corner" set up outside Charak Palika Hospital in Moti Bagh by the New Delhi Municipal Council Sunday. Made of a canvas tent, it has a glass partition separating healthcare workers from patients. This is to ensure doctors do not put themselves at risk. **Express**

Police arrest member of Jamia panel for 'inciting' anti-CAA protests

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

THE DELHI Police has arrested the media coordinator of the Jamia Coordination Committee (JCC) for allegedly organising the anti-CAA protests in Northeast Delhi's Jafraabad in February this year.

The case was registered under IPC sections 147 (rioting) and 148 (rioting with weapons).

Police claimed the woman, Safoora Zargar, was a part of the protest. According to police, protesters had blocked roads near Jafraabad, which triggered a protest by pro-CAA protesters and sparked riots in Northeast Delhi.

Zargar was arrested from her house in Ghaffar Manzil on Saturday.

She is an MPhil student at Jamia Millia Islamia and lives with her family near the university campus.

Joint Commissioner of Police (Eastern Range) Alok Kumar said, "Police arrested her on Saturday after a case was registered against her for organising the protests near Jafraabad Metro station."

Police had earlier arrested another Jamia student for allegedly inciting a mob to attack police during the riots in Northeast Delhi.

The student, Meeran Haider, had been arrested on April 1 after being questioned.

बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा
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Terms of Engagement: Fixed Term Engagement on Contract Basis for a period of 3 years extendable by a period of 1 year at a time subject to a maximum term of 5 years. On expiry of the term, the engagement may be extended into other related roles in the Bank as per Bank's Requirement.

Eligibility criteria & Application: Interested candidates are advised to visit the Bank's website www.bankofbaroda.in (Career Page, Current Opportunities Section) for further details on the above position, eligibility criteria & online submission of applications. The last date of submission of the application is **22 April, 2020 (23:59 hours)**.

Place: Mumbai **GENERAL MANAGER & HEAD**
Date: 13.04.2020 **(STRATEGIC HR & HR INTEGRATION)**



CORONA WATCH

29 isolation rooms set up

New Delhi: Twenty nine isolation rooms have been set up at St. Stephen's Hospital by a private company Sonalika Tractors. "These quarantine rooms are well equipped and air conditioned. They have personal protective equipment for hospital staff as well," Raman Mittal, executive director of Sonalika Group, said.

Pay digitally, urges discom

New Delhi: Tata Power-DDL has asked consumers to avoid visiting customer centres for bill payments and urged its consumers to settle them digitally.

FIR against fake portal

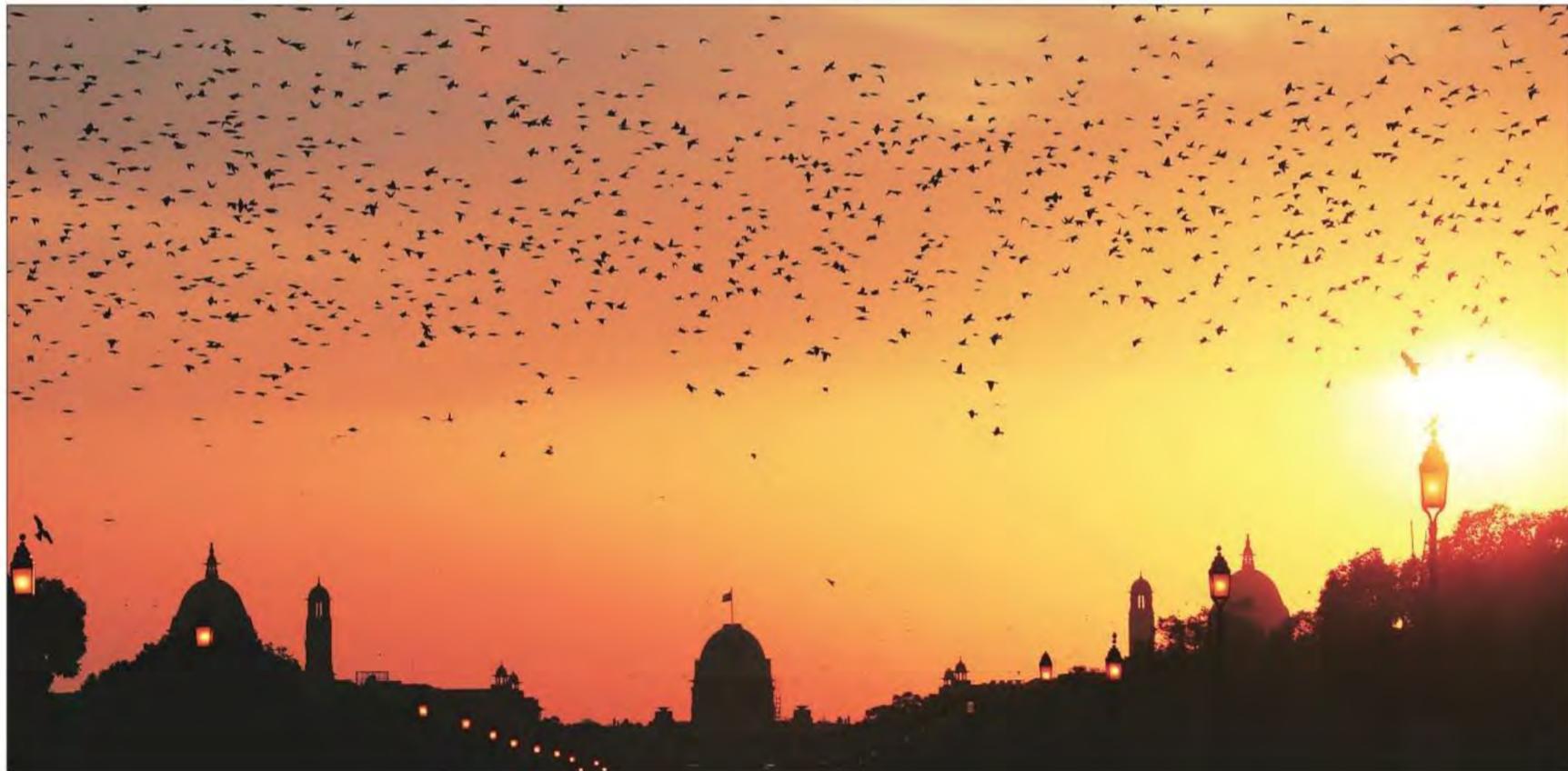
New Delhi: Delhi Food and Civil Supplies Minister Imran Hussain Sunday ordered police to file an FIR against a "fake portal" indulging in fake registration for new ration cards and cheating people. ENS

Gurgaon: E-classes for govt school students

Gurgaon: In order to ensure the education of government school students does not get impacted during the lockdown, the Gurgaon Education department has started online classes for student of classes I to XII. According to officials, there are 607 government schools in the district, with over 80,698 students between classes I to XII. The online classes, officials said, are being held from 9 am to 12.30 pm.

8 held for violating lockdown

New Delhi: Eight people have been arrested for allegedly violating the lockdown and gathering at a gurdwara in North Delhi's Kotwali on Sunday. Police said the men were found by a patrolling team around 2 am. ENS



GETTING WARMER

Rashtrapati Bhawan at dusk. The maximum temperature in the capital touched 37.2 degrees Celsius on Sunday, and is expected to touch 40 degrees on Wednesday. Prem Nath Pandey

85 FRESH CASES

5 deaths in capital for second consecutive day, toll touches 24

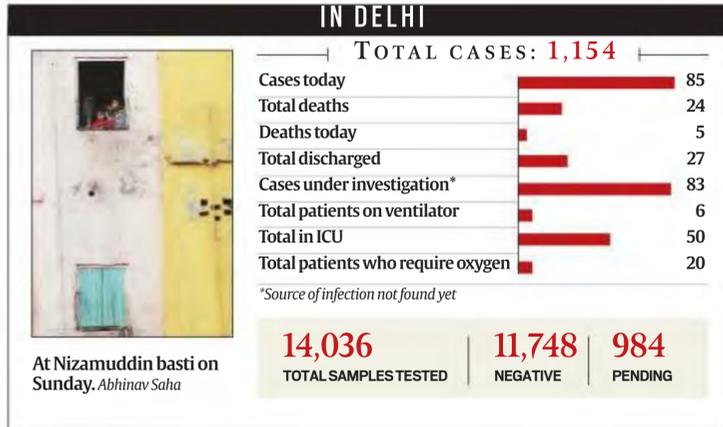
ASTHA SAXENA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

THE CAPITAL saw 85 new coronavirus cases and five deaths, taking the total death toll from the virus to 24. The total number of positive cases in Delhi has reached 1,154.

Of the 85 new cases, 34 — categorised as 'under special operation' — had attended the religious gathering at Nizamuddin Markaz and 26 either have a travel history or are case of local transmission. Across Delhi, officials are yet to find the source of transmission for 83 people, of whom 25 were reported on Sunday, who have been categorised as 'under investigation'.

There has been a massive spike in COVID-19 deaths with five deaths each in the last two days.

Among the five new deaths reported Sunday are two men — aged 42 and 40 — from Turkman Gate; a 52-year-old



man from Bara Hindu Rao; a 78-year-old man from Inderpuri; and a 58-year-old man from UP's Bulandshahr. While the first four patients were admitted to RML, the one from Bulandshahr was admitted to Safdarjung Hospital.

"We are going to assess the details of the people who have died in Delhi so far. Many of the recent deaths are reported from the Central district, which has become an important area to monitor. While many of them have comorbid condi-

tions, the contact tracing and the previous travel history has to be identified," said a senior official from the department of health.

In Delhi, 14,036 people have been tested so far in government and private labs. Of them,



1,154 have tested positive and the results of 984 people are pending. So far, 11,748 people have tested negative for COVID-19.

On Sunday, 127 symptomatic persons were shifted to various hospitals and 58 people were released from quarantine centers in Delhi. Of the 2,406 beds earmarked for COVID-19 patients in Delhi hospitals, only 1,635 are occupied.

As many as 50 patients are admitted to the ICU ward and six of them are on ventilators, while 20 patients are on oxygen support. The department has carried out the sample collection activity for the high-risk contacts of positive cases in the identified containment zones.

Another patient tests positive at cancer institute

SHIVAM PATEL
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

A 52-YEAR-OLD cancer patient, who was shifted from Delhi State Cancer Institute (DSCI) to Dharamshila Cancer Care hospital recently, and his attendant have tested positive for coronavirus. He is the fourth patient to test positive from the institute, which has also seen 22 health-care workers and a security guard contracting the virus.

A total of seven patients from the institute were earlier shifted to Dharamshila Narayana Superspecialty Hospital. "We are getting the other six patients tested again," said a senior doctor from DSCI.

On Saturday, a 56-year-old cancer patient from the institute suffering from gallbladder cancer died a day after he tested positive for COVID-19.

Meanwhile, two more health-care workers have tested positive for coronavirus in Delhi, pushing the total number of affected medical staff in the capital to 44. Test results came positive Saturday for a 48-year-old assistant nursing superintendent at Lok Nayak hospital and a lab technician at the DSCI. A security guard from DSCI also tested positive.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, the 48-year-old, who is currently in isolation at Lok Nayak, said, "I don't know how I got the virus, be-



Seven patients were shifted from DSCI to Dharamshila Hospital earlier

cause I was not in direct contact with patients, but I was in contact with nurses and doctors. We wear masks and aprons, the full PPE kit is for the frontline staff."

According to a senior doctor at Lok Nayak, she came in contact with 30 people, including her husband, who is a sub-inspector, and two sons.

A security guard from DSCI who tested positive Sunday is a resident of Muzaffarnagar. He left for his native place on March 23. "He is admitted in Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality hospital. His wife and kids have tested negative and the contact tracing is going on," said a senior doctor from DSCI.

The technician at DSCI, who tested positive Saturday, was working in a lab at the institute. "Contact tracing for both security guard and the technician is underway," the DSCI official said.

Two new cases in Faridabad

SAKSHI DAYAL
GURGAON, APRIL 12

TWO MORE people tested positive for coronavirus in Faridabad Sunday, while two others have recovered, district administration officials said.

"The two who tested positive, include a Faridabad resident who had attended the Tablighi Jamaat gathering in Delhi's Nizamuddin and the son of another person who had attended the same gathering. The latter's

sample was taken after his father tested positive. The district has now 31 cases, of which 26 are active," said a Faridabad district administration spokesperson.

The two who have recovered and been discharged include a 54-year-old woman who is the wife of an employee at a Noida firm, where several people had tested positive for COVID-19 last month, and her son. Her husband had recovered earlier this week.

An FIR was also registered on Sunday against a chemist in Faridabad, who tested positive

a day earlier, with officials saying he had hidden his symptoms. "He had developed COVID-19 symptoms but had been treating himself," said a spokesperson of the district administration.

Nuh also recorded a new case Sunday, bringing the total number of cases in the district to 45 — the highest in Haryana, followed by Gurgaon at 32.

"The person is a relative of the truck driver who had recently travelled to Gujarat and tested positive," said an official.

To limit movement, police to issue gate passes in Rohini

AMIL BHATNAGAR
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

TO CURTAIL movement during the lockdown and ensure cooperation by residents, Delhi Police has decided to issue movement passes to a few houses in Rohini for purchase of essential items.

According to police, only 5% of the total houses in a particular society will be given the passes. The idea is to reduce vehicular movement and crowds in markets as residents with passes will cater to the demands of their neighbours as well, said police.

The passes will be provided to approximately 300 societies across three police stations in Rohini. ACP (Rohini) Prakshay Kumar Singh said: "In view of the pandemic, RWAs are requested to extend voluntary support to authorities for ensuring social distancing in the area. In this regard, we have decided to start a community gate-pass system... We wish to start gate passes for 5% total houses in the community. Only persons with passes will be allowed to go out



Passes being prepared on Sunday

to buy essential items. Members of the community will go out by rotation."

DCP (Rohini) S D Mishra added: "We are planning to implement it across the district, but only those areas which have a proper association."

Police have left it to the RWAs to identify "responsible" people who can be given the passes. Police have left it to the RWAs to devise a system to issue passes.

According to officials, a record register will be maintained at the gate which will list the names and other details of those who have been issued passes.

Policeman posted at AIIMS positive

MAHENDER SINGH
MANRAL
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

DAYS AFTER a traffic policeman was found positive for COVID-19, his 57-year-old batchmate, an assistant sub-inspector currently posted at the AIIMS Trauma Centre police post, also tested positive on Sunday evening. Initial investigation has revealed the traffic policeman met his batchmate when he went for a check-up at the Trauma Centre.

The 49-year-old ASI posted with the traffic police had tested positive last week. A resident of Kalkaji police colony, he was shifted to AIIMS while his wife and two children have been advised home quarantine as they are asymptomatic.

Police said the ASI had been sent on leave two weeks ago after he had complained of fever. "For his medical check-up, he met his batchmate, who had asked him to come to the

Trauma Centre," said an officer. The Southeast district police, while preparing a report of his contact tracing, found that he was in touch with 60 people from the police colony and 19 people from his department. However, he had not mentioned his batchmate from the Trauma Centre.

On Sunday, the ASI posted at the Trauma Centre, a resident of Shyam Nagar in Okhla, tested positive after his report was received from RML hospital. "A few days ago, he had complained of fever and was sent on leave. He has now been sent to Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital in Dilshad Garden. His family members have been advised home quarantine," a senior police officer said. Local police alerted residents and sanitised the area with the civic agency's help.

Police have found that he came in contact with 32 policemen, including DCP (South-West), during work. "All 32 police officers have been advised home quarantine," an officer said.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR
(Telefax No. 0191-2496089, E-Mail id: xenmhchdk@yahoo.in)

GIST OF E-NIT NO: MHCHD/TS /2020-21/01 /e-tendering (Short-term)
Dated:- 10.04.2020

e-tenders are invited on item rate basis from Original Equipment Manufacturers of approved makes or their Authorized dealers and Registered/ Reputed firms for the below mentioned work:-

Name of Work	Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of T.Doc. (In rupees)	Earnest Money (In Rs)	Time of Completion (in days)	Position of Funds
1	25.72	1000	50000/-	10	Demanded

1. The Tender document Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.kiten-tenders.gov.in from 10.04.2020 (16.00 hrs).

2. The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from 11.04.2020 (10:00hrs) to 17.04.2020 (14:00 hrs) in two (02) cover.

3. The bids uploaded on the website up to due date and time will be opened on 17.04.2020 (16.00 hrs) or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar.

No. MHCHD/TS-121-28
Dated: 09.04.2020
DIPK-NB-34/20

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
MHCHD, Srinagar.

5 THE OUTBREAK NATION



CORONA WATCH



A barber at work amid the lockdown in Kolkata. Partha Paul

MANIPUR First COVID patient discharged

Imphal: Manipur's first COVID-19 patient, a 23-year-old woman who returned from the UK, was discharged Sunday from a government hospital in Imphal. The woman had spent 20 days in the hospital's isolation ward. She tested negative for the virus on April 6 after two consecutive screenings. However, she will remain in quarantine for 14 more days at home. The woman will be declared virus-free if she tests negative after the period. **ENS**

In Meghalaya, Assam, liquor shops to open

Guwahati: Liquor shops will be allowed to open in Assam and Meghalaya from Monday, subject to factors like timing, social distancing and cleanliness, authorities said. An Assam Excise Department letter approved the opening of warehouses, bottling plants, distilleries and breweries from Monday. It said shops can operate from 10am-5pm with a skeleton staff and must avoid overcrowding. Similar orders were passed in Meghalaya. Shops can remain open from 9am-4pm with restrictions. **ENS**

J&K Health team held hostage by family

Srinagar: Three policemen were injured after locals threw stones on a police team that was rushed to a village in central Kashmir on Saturday afternoon to rescue a health team, which was allegedly held hostage by a family, officials said on Sunday. The health workers had visited Wathoora village of Budgam district to screen a resident for COVID-19 symptoms when they were allegedly held hostage by the agitated family members. **ENS**

On free tests, Centre tells pvt labs: Will take up matter in SC

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

DAYS AFTER the Supreme Court ordered private laboratories to provide COVID-19 testing free of cost, the Centre has assured the labs that it will take up the matter in the apex court in a way that protects "all interests", sources told *The Indian Express*.

Following last week's order, private labs called upon the government to "come up with modalities" so that their service "remains sustainable".

Sources said the government "recognises the need for liquidity to keep private laboratories afloat" and understands the pitfalls of a universal free testing rule for COVID-19.

The Centre had earlier fixed a price cap of Rs 4,500 on each test for 68 private labs in 12 states that were approved.

Dr Arvind Lal, managing director of Dr Lal Pathlabs, who has been holding talks with the government on behalf of the private labs, told *The Indian Express*, "The government has told us they are working on it and they will go to court on this."

He said, "They (government) have been given 15 days to reply.



The Centre had fixed a price cap of Rs 4,500 on each test for the 65 private labs approved across 12 states. Prashant Nadkar

I understand they will reply sooner rather than later. They told us, 'You should not worry. We will represent our interest in court.' They said that currently our interest and their interest is the same and this time we are on the same side.

"They will represent us, too. We are currently doing the tests for free. When we run out of money, we will stop."

On Saturday, a Delhi-based doctor, Kaushal Kant Mishra, moved the Supreme Court, seeking modification of its April 6 direction that COVID-19 tests

should be free in both private and government labs. In his plea, Mishra urged the court to allow private labs to do the tests at the rate fixed by the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), with exception to provide free testing for people from Economically Weaker Sections, which should be reimbursed by the government.

Sources said the government is banking on the reach and efficiency of the private sector to reach its goal of 1 lakh tests a day. Moreover, after the decision to include testing and treatment for

COVID-19 under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana — tertiary care arm of Ayushman Bharat — it is felt that the "rich can afford" to pay Rs 4,500 for the test, which would mean that much load off the already overstretched government laboratories. Even that number in effect may be too small to make any powerful case for free testing, sources said.

Dr Naveen Dang, director, Dr Dang's Lab, said: "It (free testing) is indeed an unsustainable model, but for the last three days we have been testing for free. We have done about a hundred tests... we agreed to Rs 4,500, knowing that even then we would take some losses. The actual costs are closer to Rs 5,000, but we agreed in national interest. But we cannot take this below-the-belt hit (free testing). Nobody can keep spending from their own pocket. Let's hope we get some relief."

At present, 151 labs in the ICMR system are testing for COVID-19, and the testing output of private labs has not picked up yet. For instance, official figures show that out of 16,564 samples tested on April 10-11, 14,210 were scanned in government facilities.

ON COVID-19 FRONT LINES IN MUMBAI

Resident doctors struggle to keep distance in hostels

TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

WHILE THEY are asking patients to practise distancing amid the COVID-19 outbreak, resident doctors in Maharashtra are struggling to follow the same principle.

Lodged in cramped hostels in Mumbai, each resident doctor is sharing a room with three-four other doctors. Their mattresses are one-two feet apart and there is a common toilet for about 10 doctors.

On Sunday, two resident doctors tested positive for COVID-19 in Sion Hospital and two more in Seven Hills hospital. The cases have sent alarm bells ringing among resident doctors who now fear that living in close quarters may become a source of cross-infection for the front line workers.

At least 90 healthcare workers have contracted COVID-19 infection in Mumbai — about 8 per cent of the total number of cases in the city that accounts for the maximum cases in Maharashtra.

"If we collapse, who will treat the patients?" a resident doctor from Sion Hospital asked.

Doctors are now requesting separate accommodation for those posted in fever clinics and



Lodged in cramped hostels, each resident doctor is sharing a room with three or four other doctors. Express

isolation wards. While Seven Hills Hospital, dedicated for COVID-19 cases, is providing living quarters in five hotels of Taj, other hospitals have asked residents to "adjust" in the hostels.

Sion Hospital has three hostels with 210 rooms for over 800 resident doctors. Two resident doctors from medicine and surgery departments have tested positive for COVID-19. One worked in an isolation ward. The other attended to a critical patient who required an emergency pancreas surgery. The patient also had pleural effusion — water in the lungs — that required another procedure. He was breathless, but doctors had no time to wait for swab results and so a surgery was con-

ducted. After surgery, his swab tested positive for COVID-19.

The two doctors were shifted to Seven Hills Hospital's isolation facility on Sunday. Two others tested positive in Seven Hills Hospital after getting exposed to COVID-19 patients on duty. They too are in isolation at Seven Hills Hospital and all of them are stable.

"We share the same canteen. Toilets are not disinfected. And hostel rooms are too small. There is ample scope for the virus to transmit," a resident doctor from Sion Hospital said. He said several resident doctors were exposed to the one who has tested positive.

Contact tracing for the two doctors in Sion Hospital started on Sunday. "But the administration is making no attempts to quarantine us. Several doctors and nurses are getting exposed. Once exposed, we have to be quarantined for 14 days. That is not happening because of lack of human resources. If we test negative, we have to report back to work," a resident doctor in Kasturba Hospital said.

Resident doctors have repeatedly raised this issue with BMC and demanded that rooms in nearby lodges, guesthouses and hotels be opened up for doctors treating COVID-19 patients.



REACHING OUT

A private organisation distributes food to the people in Allahabad on Sunday. Ritesh Shukla

Kamal Nath says Centre delayed lockdown to topple his govt

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, APRIL 12

THREE WEEKS after resigning as Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Congress leader Kamal Nath on Sunday alleged that the announcement of the nationwide lockdown was delayed only to topple the 15-month-old government headed by him.

Speaking to the media, he said it was obvious from the chronology of events leading to the fall of his government that Parliament was made to run to drive home the point that if Lok Sabha can function, so can Assemblies.

Nath resigned as Chief Minister on March 20 ahead of a Supreme Court-mandated floor test. Citing the COVID-19 outbreak, Speaker N P Prajapati had

4 MORE DEATHS IN MP

Bhopal: On Sunday, two patients who had died in Bhopal earlier tested positive for coronavirus, and two more deaths were reported from Indore, the worst affected city in MP. Indore CMHO Dr Pravin Jadia said the toll in Indore is 32. The state toll is now 43. **ENS**

on March 16 adjourned the Assembly session till March 26 instead of holding a floor test.

Nath said that as Chief Minister, he tried his best to tackle the COVID-19 situation. He said the Centre responded late because it was busy plotting the fall of his government. "Shivraj Singh

Chouhan formed the government late on March 23 and the lockdown began on March 24," he said. Targeting the one-man government of Chouhan, he said, "Nowhere in the world is a government functioning without the health or home minister."

Speaking on coronavirus cases in the state, he said the number could be much more than the official figures because the government had not carried out testing in rural areas. "Doctors in rural areas may pass off the infection as flu," he said.

Referring to large-scale infection among state health officials, he blamed it on the "business as usual" attitude. Nath also said the Centre must come up with a "focused" economic package and said a package is as good as its implementation.

Wadhawans: Not absconding, responded to ED, CBI notices

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

BROTHERS DHEERAJ and Kapil Wadhawan, who along with 21 others, obtained special permission from then Principal Secretary (Home) Amitabh Gupta to travel from Khandala to Mahabaleshwar on April 9 amid the nationwide lockdown, on Sunday issued a statement claiming they had to travel due to health issues faced by them and their mother.

In the statement, issued by their legal firm, the Wadhawan brothers also denied that they were absconding, claiming that they had been in correspondence with the ED and the CBI and had given them reasons for not joining their probes.

On the notices issued to them by the ED and the CBI for appearing in probes into the multi-crore scam linked to Yes Bank, the statement said, "Mr Kapil Wadhawan and Mr Dheeraj Wadhawan... have responded to each of the notices, seeking accommodation for their appearance as they were travelling."

It added, "As after their last letters, the Wadhawans had not received any further notices/summons, they felt comforted that their request for accommodation had been accepted, particularly considering the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic..." When contacted, Satara SP Tejasvi Satpute said: "The district police has seized the vehicles of the Wadhawans."

The Wadhawans, along with 21 others, are currently at government quarantine facility in Panchgani. An FIR was registered against them for travelling during the nationwide lockdown.

UP, MP to lift some curbs this week, cautiously

ASAD REHMAN, MILIND GHATWAI & SUKHBIR SIWACH
LUCKNOW, BHOPAL, FATEHABAD, APRIL 12

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday announced that some sectors will restart work while following social distancing norms from April 15, and that state ministries too, will start working from the same day. A meeting of cabinet ministers was held at the CM's residence, where these decisions were taken.

In a video address, however, Adityanath said the state government would follow the Centre's guidelines on the lockdown.

At the cabinet meeting, responsibilities were given to 11 ministers regarding the action to be taken to restart certain sectors after April 15. "We have constituted some committees to oversee the action that will be taken after April 15. On the lockdown, the state government will completely follow the guidelines of the central government... But we are also deciding about routine services, emergency services, and are making arrangements. Under the leadership of Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya, a committee will be formed which will look into how construction work can be done following social distancing and lockdown norms so that labourers can get employment, for example on expressways, big

construction projects..." Adityanath said.

"Another committee under Deputy CM Dinesh Sharma will work on moving the educational syllabus online. For social distancing, it is essential that we don't re-open schools and colleges... Education must be ensured online..." he said.

In Bhopal, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the lockdown will continue after April 14, but in a different form.

Procurement, rural employment guarantee scheme works, and small economic activities will be allowed in districts that have not been affected by the outbreak, he said. A high-level committee has been formed to suggest ways to improve the state's economy.

Procurement of rabi crop will begin on April 15, following strict social distancing norms. Each day 10-12 farmers will be called to the procurement centres through text messages. Procurement will not be held in worst-hit districts like Indore, Bhopal and Ujjain.

In Haryana, with farmers facing the unprecedented challenge of keeping wheat at their homes, the government is considering the demand to provide gunny bags. The farmers usually take their produce directly to mandis, but the government has restricted the number of farmers who can go to the mandis to only 100 every day.

Wheat procurement will take place from April 20 to June 30 to ensure purchases in a staggered manner.

Punjab: Student tests positive, campus sealed

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA
JALANDHAR, APRIL 12

THE LOVELY Professional University (LPU) campus in Phagwara was sealed on Saturday night after a student who lived in the hostel there tested positive for a COVID-19 infection.

According to the health department, samples of 27 primary contacts of the girl have already been collected. The contacts list includes 150 people — 68 students, medical staff, mess staff, hostel warden.

Most of those on the list were staying in the same hostel building as the girl who tested positive.

Accordingly, the two roommates of the student — one from Telangana and other from Chhattisgarh who left the hostel on March 15 for their home states — have also been contacted. "We have sealed the entire university and asked that no one will come outside and also directed the university officials to serve food to the students in their respective rooms, not in the mess," said Kapurthala Deputy Commissioner, Deepiti Uppal.

Gujarat: 2 held for selling tobacco product by drone

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
RAJKOT, APRIL 12

TWO MEN were arrested on Saturday in Morbi town for allegedly selling a tobacco mix called "mava", by flying packs of it using a drone, in violation of the lockdown orders in place.

The matter came to light when the accused — Hiren Gardhariya (29) and Ravi Bhadaniya (26), both residents of Morbi town — put up a video on social media platform TikTok showing the drone flying packs of the mix. 'B' Division police station booked the duo under IPC 188 for violating prohibitory orders.

"Gardhariya works with a private firm while Bhadaniya is a professional photographer and owns a drone. They shot the video and shared it on TikTok to advertise their sale of mava. Such an act can assemble a crowd in violation of prohibitory orders," police inspector Pravin Gadhiya said.

Tobacco products have not been explicitly defined as a daily essential item and, therefore, their sale has been prohibited since the lockdown began in the state.

Govt must ensure sustenance for the poor during lockdown, says AoL founder

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

IN THE wake of the exodus by migrant workers during the lockdown, spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has suggested that the government should ensure livelihood and sustenance for the poor so that lockdown rules are not violated.

"Not just stopping buses, trains will do. You (the government) need to convince people, give them their livelihood, give them sustenance, only then it will be possible," the Art of Living founder said

during a video interaction with Anant Goenka, Executive Director, The Indian Express Group.

Most daily wage workers do not necessarily possess ration cards or ID cards, said the spiritual guru, adding: "When it comes to daily wage workers, the government alone cannot fulfill all their needs. There are many steps to be followed like ration cards and there are many people who do not have these ration or ID cards, they need to be supported. For this, NGOs and religious organisations must come forward to help them..."

The Art of Living (AoL) founder also said that if migration is not contained, it beats the entire purpose of the lockdown. "If we have to stop rural India from the virus, we need to stop migrations from the cities," he asserted.

When asked about the Indian government's response to the pandemic, he praised the pro-active-ness of the government and said: "I think India took the right decision at the right time. Our government has done this clampdown much before other countries could realise the danger of the situation. We learnt a lesson from the West, so we were very quick with the clampdown and that is good."

The spiritual guru cautioned the people against coming onto the streets to celebrate once the lockdown is lifted. "The whole purpose of lockdown will then be finished, so we have to be cautious."

He also advocated the use of Ayurveda to tackle the menace of coronavirus and suggested that the government should consider opening up Ayurvedic facilities across the country to treat COVID-19 patients.

As per WHO, there is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat COVID-19 as of now. "People with serious illness should be hospitalised. Most patients recover thanks to supportive care," the WHO website says.

Mumbai: Cured infant returns from hospital with mother, gets rousing welcome from neighbours

TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

AS SHE walked out of the ambulance at her residential society on Saturday, her six-month-old baby in her arms, the Kalyan resident was greeted with claps and whistles by her neighbours.

The mother and son are returning home a week after the infant was admitted to the Kasturba hospital with a fever and later tested positive for the virus.

The 36-year-old mother, overwhelmed, said while the last few days have been tough, she has several people to thank — her neighbour who agreed to look after her six-year-old boy

who had tested negative, and well-wishers who approached state health minister to get the infant admitted to a hospital.

The first to test positive in the family was the grandfather. Already a diabetic with low blood pressure, he had fever for few days before a doctor advised testing. He tested positive on April 3 and was admitted to Kasturba hospital.

"My baby had also developed fever. We went to a physician first but medicines did not help," the mother said.

On April 3, the family first went to Shastri hospital in Kalyan but the hospital refused to admit the child citing lack of facilities. "They asked us to visit SRCC hospital in Mumbai," the woman said. She travelled 57 km

to Narayan Health SRCC hospital, in Haji Ali, where doctors said they did not have a COVID-19 ward to admit children.

"By then he was pale, the fever was not subsiding. I had to beg them to treat my child. The doctor finally wrote a reference letter for Kasturba hospital," she said.

By the time they reached Kasturba hospital, it was the morning of April 4. There, the family waited for half a day. "The hospital officials said they were not admitting patients from outside Mumbai.

As the family waited outside the hospital's ward 9 till evening, her acquaintances reached out to Public Health Minister Rajesh Tope. He directed the hospital to admit the baby. The entire fam-

ily was tested — while the woman and her six-year-old son tested negative, the baby, husband and mother-in-law tested positive.

The woman's neighbour volunteered to look after the six-year-old while she decided to remain in hospital with the baby. They were given a room with two other infected persons.

In a day, his condition improved. For many at the hospital, the baby was the only source of respite in the panic that the virus has caused among patients.

"They would call out to him from their bed, play with him. He always managed to make them smile," the mother said.

This week, the baby was tested twice and both times, he tested negative. On Saturday, he

6 EXPRESS NETWORK



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



SPECIAL SKILL

WITH SALONS shut during the lockdown, LJP leader Chirag Paswan showed off his grooming skills on Sunday as he tweeted a video of himself trimming the beard of his father and Union Food and Public Distribution Minister Ram Vilas Paswan. Chirag could be seen rolling a trimmer across his father's face in a time-lapse video. Along with it he wrote: "Tough times but see #lockdown has a brighter side. Never knew I had these skills. Let's fight Corona Crisis and create beautiful memories too."

CUE TO CLAP

TAKING A cue from PM Narendra Modi, Nepal PM KP Sharma Oli has asked all Nepalese citizens to play the national anthem and then clap on their terraces and balconies for health workers and essential services workers at 8 am on Monday.

MONDAY BLUES

SENIOR OFFICIALS of ministries were a harrowed lot on Sunday, preparing to go to work from Monday following the government's decision that ministers would start going to offices as it eases back into normalcy. Many of them got feedback that their junior staff were not willing to travel to work in the midst of the lockdown. Many senior officers complained that this directive did not make much sense when the idea was to ensure social distancing to contain the spread of a virus.

Foreigners break lockdown order, made to write apology 500 times

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE DEHRADUN, APRIL 12

A STROLL along the Ganges and a dip in the holy river during the lockdown turned embarrassing for a group of foreign nationals who were made to write down an apology at least 500 times by the police in Uttarakhand.

Caught at Sai Ganga Ghat in Tehri Garhwal district's Tapovan area, the six men and four women from Israel, Australia, Mexico and Latvia apologised, saying they wanted to meditate

near the Ganga during the relaxation period.

"I told them that the relaxation period is only for moving out to buy essential goods," said Vinod Kumar, the in-charge of the Tapovan police outpost.

Apparently not satisfied with the apology, the police brought down sheets of paper from the outpost and distributed them among the foreigners. Each one was asked to write: "I did not follow the rules of lockdown. I am very sorry", at least 500 times, before being let off with a warning.

Looking to flatten curve in 2-3 weeks: Govt

India has only 3.2 cases per mn, most have mild symptoms and will recover fully: Health Minister

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

POINTING OUT that India has the "lowest number" of confirmed coronavirus cases in the world, Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan on Saturday said that the government is looking at flattening the curve over the next three or four weeks, and the country will cross the 2-lakh COVID-19 testing mark in the next few days.

Vardhan said, "We have had only 3.2 cases per 1 million population. Even among them, most (patients) have mild symptoms and will recover fully. Only 15-20 per cent of those who have

tested positive actually require hospitalisation."

The minister on Saturday chaired a review meeting of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and activities of the 38 laboratories across the country that work under the CSIR in the battle against COVID-19.

CSIR director-general Dr Shekhar C Mande apprised Vardhan of the recent initiative of setting up of a Core Strategy Group (CSG) and the five verticals and the five verticals under which coronavirus-related activities are being carried out. These verticals are Digital and Molecular Surveillance; Rapid and Economical Diagnostics; New Drugs/



Dr Harsh Vardhan

Repurposing of Drugs and associated production processes; Hospital Assistive Devices and PPEs; and Supply Chain and Logistics Support Systems.

The Health Minister said, "Over the next three or four weeks we hope to flatten the

curve. Of course, the virus will stay in some form or the other, so research being carried out by CSIR is not just about fighting the pandemic but also to help us in future. The vaccine and drug discovery has to continue. One of the most important outcomes is that of genome sequencing, which is being carried out by CCMB-Hyderabad. Hopefully, this can connect to the virus genome sequencing being carried out in other countries."

Dr Rakesh Mishra, director, CSIR-CCMB, said that nearly 500 sequences of coronavirus are expected from CSIR in the next three or four weeks. "This work will help us understand the virulence and character of the virus,

how fast it is mutating, and its exact path of transmission," Vardhan said.

Delhi based CSIR-IGIB has recently developed a "rapid and cheap paper-based diagnostic test" and CSIR-IICB has initiated plasma-based therapy for coronavirus patients.

Addressing the heads of various science agencies, the Health Minister said, "...remember, we are running against time here. It is true that whatever you do today will benefit the future, but please remember that we are at war and that we need to minimise damage. Unlike research that usually takes months or years, we need to be faster — or else it will be too late."

Provide counselling to migrants: Centre to states

DEEPTIMAN TIWARI NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

WITH THE lockdown set to be extended for two more weeks and angry migrant workers resorting to violent agitations, the Centre has asked states to provide them with psychological counselling.

Reminding the states about the Supreme Court's directions, the Ministry of Home Affairs said in a letter that they are supposed to take care of the medical and psychological needs of the migrant workers along with food and shelter requirements.

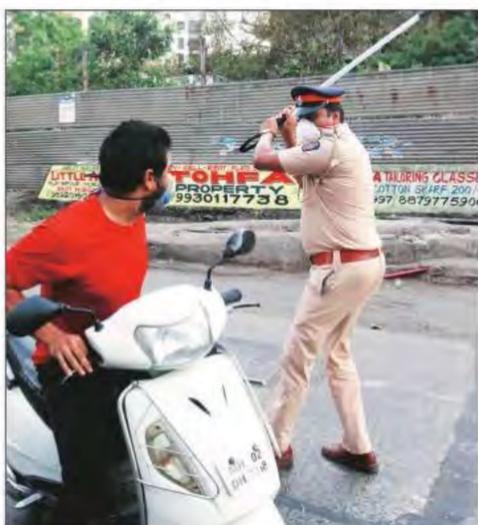
"The court directed that adequate medical facilities besides proper arrangements for food, clean drinking water and sanitation be ensured for migrant workers at relief camps/shelters across the country. Further, trained counsellors and/or com-

munity group leaders belonging to all faiths should visit the relief camps/ shelter homes and deal with any consternation that the migrants might be going through," the letter said.

Only recently, migrant workers in Surat went on a rampage after running out of money, and demanded to be sent home.

"The court also observed that the anxiety and fear of the migrants should be understood by the police and other authorities, and that they should deal with the migrants in a humane manner. Further, the State Governments/ UTs should endeavour to engage volunteers along with the police to supervise the welfare activities of the migrants," the letter said.

According to the MHA, its communication also reiterates similar directions laid out in a Health Ministry letter to states and Union Territories.



ON CURFEW DUTY

Enforcing lockdown in Mumbai on Sunday. Pradip Das

Three killed in Pak shelling along LoC

ADIL AKHZER & ARUN SHARMA SRINAGAR, JAMMU, APRIL 12

THREE CIVILIANS, including a child, were killed and five others were injured as Pakistan resorted to shelling at various places along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday.

The Army said Pakistan violated the ceasefire and targeted the civilian population in Kashmir's Kupwara district.

"Unprovoked ceasefire violation initiated by Pakistan in Keran Sector at 5 pm. Pakistan now targeting civilian population in Kupwara Sector near the LoC resulting in killing 3 innocent civilians including one

woman and a child," Srinagar-based Defence spokesperson Col Rajesh Kalia said.

SP, Kupwara, Ambarakar Shriram Dinkar said two civilians, including a 17-year-old, from Reddi in Chowkibal were killed in the shelling and several homes damaged.

Earlier on Sunday afternoon, local residents in Panzgam ob-

jected to the Army positioning heavy weaponry in an area not far from densely civilian settlements. While a video of an altercation between residents and Army men went viral, a police officer said he was unaware of the matter.

Police officers in Handwara district said a eight-year-old boy was killed in shelling at Vilgam area.

THE GOVERNANCE REPORT

In Mussoorie academy, IAS officers get training in tackling virus

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

THE NEW batch of 180 IAS officers, who are now preparing for deployment in the districts for the first time, are being provided in-depth training in enforcing the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, and the Disaster Management Act, 2005, along with best practices in policy intervention in the country's efforts to manage the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) in Mussoorie, where the elite civil servants are trained, began online classes this week to finish the curriculum before the officers, of the 2019 batch of the IAS, are posted to their first jobs in a couple of months. Like the rest of the country, LBSNAA too, is in lockdown.

The young officers will be in charge of the smallest administrative blocks on the ground, where mitigation measures might still be in place by the time they take up their posts, government officials said.

"Even if the lockdown is lifted, a lot of restrictions will be in place. In that context, how to implement the Epidemic Act, the Disaster Management Act, and other government directives so that preventive actions are enforced, will be important. Normally we would not have gone into an in-depth study of these Acts and aspects. But this year is different," a top government official told *The Indian Express*.

Punjab's plan for seamless wheat procurement with social distancing

RAAKHI JAGGA LUDHIANA, APRIL 12

IN THE wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, a key challenge for the Punjab government has been to ensure that the procurement of wheat is done in a seamless manner while adhering to health advisories.

Mandis in Punjab are expecting about 18 lakh metric tonnes of wheat to arrive in the mandis as procurement starts from April 15. Although around 17 lakh farmers are engaged in wheat harvesting, the government is expecting the arrival of around 10-12 lakh farmers in the mandis to sell their produce. Add to that around 2,700 commission agents and almost 2 lakh labourers across the mandis in the states.

The main task is to ensure that this massive procurement exercise happens while maintaining social distancing norms. As a first step, this year, apart 1,434 mandis in Punjab, the government is using spaces reserved for rice shelling for unloading wheat. This means the total number of procurement points have already increased from less than 1,500 to 4,000 "so that farmers don't gather at one place and social distancing can be maintained," said Ravi Bhagat, Secretary Punjab Mandi Board (PMB) while talking with *The Indian Express*.

To further ease the pressure on everyone and reduce congestion in the mandis, the duration of the procurement process has been extended. "Normally our wheat procurement season's duration is about 20 days only, but this time it has been spread out over 47 days—that is, from April 15-May



Sanitization in progress at the Gubhaya grain market in Fazilka. Gurmeet Singh

31," explained Bhagat.

In the same light, each mandi will be allowed to process only one-third the wheat they handled last year. The remaining produce will be diverted to new procurement centres. "For example, in Khanna, the largest mandi in Asia, the daily arrival of wheat during peak season is 1 lakh quintal but now, we have a cut-off of 30,000 quintals," said Bhagat. Moreover, farmers from Rajasthan and Haryana have been banned from selling their produce in Punjab.

To manage these efforts, the government is using IT. Starting with the arrival of wheat to its procurement by a private or government agency, the IT section of the Mandi Board will be shepherding the process.

The IT staff has provided commission agents (or Ahrtiyas) with tokens (containing holograms), which the agents have distributed among farmers connected with them. Ahrtiyas have been told to

get an entry pass issued for the farmers by punching the concerned farmer's phone numbers, name and token number. This will allow a specific farmer to be told, through a mobile phone message, when they need to come to a procurement centre. This will also ensure that only a pre-designated number of farmers enter the mandi at any particular time. The PMB has tied up with Ola for a dashboard that tracks the passes.

Around 20 IT officials at PMB headquarters in Mohali and nearly 300 in the field (as data entry operators) will be working to make the system run in an organised manner.

Maintaining hygiene and social distancing are prerequisites and hence elaborate steps have been taken to ensure these. All mandis, as well as rice shelling spaces (both open and closed), have been divided into 30 feet zones with instructions (written in Gurmukhi) about

EXPLAINED Why mandis should be safe

WHEAT PROCUREMENT involves lakhs of farmers and labourers (many from outside the state) as well as thousands of commission agents working in close proximity with each other. At a time when the central focus is to ensure social distancing, the Punjab government is using technology as well as other policy measures to ensure that procurement happens without incident.

where to unload the wheat, where farmers are supposed to stand, where packing will be done etc. A distance of six metres is to be maintained between all individuals.

"It is a huge exercise and our staff has not been sleeping properly for the past many days. Not only this, even Indian School of Business, Mohali, is studying our entire exercise as a part of their survey," Bhagat added.

Apart from social distancing, efforts have been made to ensure that all concerned have the facility to frequently wash their hands. Washbasins with foot-operated taps have been installed in mandis. Apart from necessarily wearing masks, labourers will be required to wash their hands every 30 minutes. The Tarantaran mandi has even installed a Covid-19 safety station for sanitizing everyone entering the mandi.

FROM PAGE ONE

Dharavi's aggressive containment strategy

share with nine or 10 others is proving to be a nightmare for the police and health administration. Anju Chauhan, 30, a homemaker who lives on the 90-foot road said, "There are seven of us in this small room and three are children under 10, with my youngest aged only two years. He gets very restless after being inside the whole day, so my husband has to take him out for some fresh air and calm him down. We put on cartoon channels on TV for almost the entire day to ensure the older children stay home."

Kiran Dighavkar, Assistant Commissioner, G-South ward, conceded that "Given how cramped their accommodations are, expecting them to follow social distancing is a joke".

Said Shankar Sangam, 44, a local social worker who lives in a building on the road: "The rooms are small, there is no ventilation, it is getting hot, and people come out because they have no option. The toilets are common, one toilet is shared by around 200 people. We try to counsel them, but they are stuck between a rock and a hard place."

Congress MLA Varsha Gaikwad said: "While there are challenges, the government is trying to meet these head-on. Our focus is on sanitisation, containment, and isolation."

Ironically, the index patient in Dharavi, detected on April 1, was a man who lived in a highrise in Baliga Nagar, the most posh location in Dharavi. According to police, he had hosted members of the Tablighi Jamaat in a flat he owned nearby. His close contacts were immediately traced, but the Tablighi link came to light only after the third case was detected in Mukund Nagar, a slum settlement, on April 3. It was revealed that people from the Jamaat had attended a birthday function and met several people in the area.

The administration acted with alacrity. "We had learnt from our

TN to bear cost of pvt lab tests

Chennai: Tamil Nadu has decided to adopt an aggressive testing strategy wherein samples will be collected from not only secondary contacts of people reported positive with the virus but also from those with symptoms of influenza and respiratory problems, the government said on Sunday. Health Secretary Beela Rajesh told the media that the government has also decided to bear the cost for testing at private labs at a fixed rate. Tamil Nadu has 14 government and nine private labs, and has tested a total of 10,655 samples so far. The state has so far reported 1,075 confirmed cases, including 106 fresh cases on Sunday. Of these, 16 had interstate travel history and the remaining 90 were their secondary contacts, Rajesh said. **ENS**

'OBJECTIONABLE REMARKS' AGAINST UP CM 'The Wire' editor asked to appear in Ayodhya on April 14, SHO says sought email statement

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW, APR 12

DAYS AFTER registering two FIRs against the "editor of *The Wire*" for making allegedly objectionable remarks against Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, a team of Ayodhya police arrived at the home of the news website's founding-editor Siddharth Varadarajan in Delhi on Friday and served a notice, asking him to appear on April 14.

In a series of tweets on Friday, the day the police team appeared at their residence around 2 pm, Varadarajan's wife, Nandini Sundar mentioned that he has been asked to appear in Ayodhya even when the "lockdown will still be in force".

Confirming that local police personnel had gone to Delhi to serve the notice, Ayodhya Circle officer Amar Singh said the team was accompanied by a policeman from Delhi.

Asked how Varadarajan can appear before Ayodhya police at a time when the lockdown is in place, SHO at Ayodhya Police Station Suresh Pandey said on Sunday, "I spoke to the editor of

The Wire today and asked him to send his statement through email. He agreed to send his statement by tomorrow."

Varadarajan had, in a statement on April 1, said, "What the FIR says I have stated — that Chief Minister Adityanath attended a public religious event in Ayodhya on March 25 after the Prime Minister had announced a national lockdown — is a matter of record."

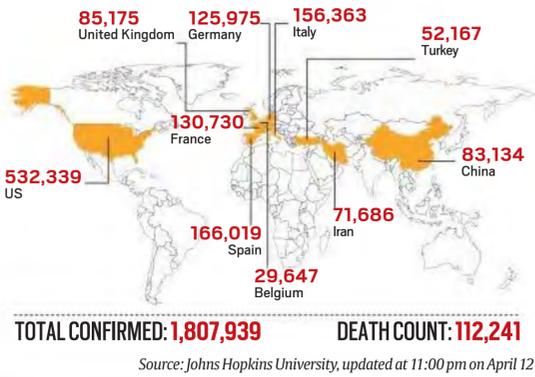
Following the FIR, the Editors Guild of India had said in a statement on April 2 that the "FIR under criminal laws at this stage is an overreaction and an act of intimidation". It stated: "Any such intimidation of the media or blaming the media for mass migration of workers will be counterproductive. Such actions will be tantamount to disabling the messenger."

On Friday, Nandini Sundar stated in multiple tweets, "...at 2 pm a plainclothes (police) man came to our home and said he had come from Ayodhya 'prashasan' to serve notice on @svaradarajan. He would not give his name. I told him to leave it in the mailbox. He refused."

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com



CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK
 YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED DAILY



Besides face cover, should I wear gloves when I go outdoors?

INITIALLY, MASKS were said to be not necessary unless you were a COVID-19 patient, a healthcare worker or someone cleaning an environment that may have had such patients in them. Now that health authorities in India, as well as the US, have recommended that everyone going out should use a face cover, does that work for gloves too? No, the previous advisory stands. Gloves are necessary for COVID-19 patients and healthcare workers; there is still no recommendation that the general public should wear them.

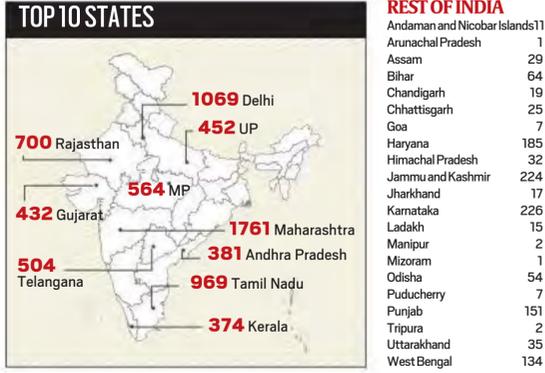


Gloves are necessary for COVID-19 patients, medical staff and those engaged in cleaning contaminated surfaces. Reuters

only be worn to protect healthcare workers from the fluids of an infected person. When dealing with a patient, a new pair of sterile gloves should be used.

If someone outside of healthcare wears gloves, some experts have observed, he or she might become less conscious that they contaminated their hands than they might have if they had touched a surface with their bare hands. As such, there is no substitute for hand hygiene — wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or with an alcohol-based sanitizer. Only when washing or sanitising is not an option should one look at gloves as a possible way to minimise infection.

INDIA COUNT: 8447 (273 DEATHS)



Union Health Ministry update as of 11 pm, April 12. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states with the most cases are listed above. 765 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 25 STATES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

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

3 hotspots, 3 control models

After early COVID-19 cases in Agra, Bhilwara & Pathanamthitta, respective state & district administrations worked hard to contain the outbreak within those geographies. Model by model, how they went about it

SIMPLY PUT

ABANTIKA GHOSH
 NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

IN THE lead-up to the meeting between the Prime Minister and state Chief Ministers, from which it emerged on Saturday that the national lockdown would continue for now, different states had come up with their own different models for containing the COVID-19 spread within smaller geographies. As most health policy experts would say, "There is no one size fits all".

At least three of the regional models for cluster containment — Agra (Uttar Pradesh), Bhilwara (Rajasthan) and Pathanamthitta (Kerala) — have been mentioned in several high-level meetings with the states during the past week. One was showcased by the Centre at the consolidated COVID-19 press briefing last week.

Agra model

The "Agra model" emerged in early March. Two men who had travelled to Austria with a relative — later Delhi's first COVID-19 case — went home to Agra where, days later, six positive cases were found. What followed was a localised yet massive combing operation for contacts, carried out by the district administration and Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme personnel. A congested area, within a 3-km radius in Lohamandi of Agra, was cordoned off immediately after the positive reports arrived at 2 am, and 1,248 teams carried out intensive contact tracing over 1,65,000 households.

The Health Ministry said in a statement: "The State, District administration and frontline workers coordinated their efforts by utilizing their existing Smart City Integrated with Command and Control Centre (ICCC) as War Rooms. Under the cluster containment and outbreak containment plans, the district administration identified epicentres, delineated impact of positive confirmed cases on the map and deployed a special task force as per the micro plan made by the district administration. The hotspots were managed through an active survey and containment plan. Area was identified within radius of 3 Km from the epicenter while 5 Km buffer zone was identified as the containment zone."

In the containment zone, Urban Primary Health Centres were roped in. Each of the 1,248 teams had 2 workers including ANMs/ASHA/AWW reaching out to 9.3 lakh



Police in Bhilwara during the end of March; it was cordoned off early. PTI

of people through household screening. Additionally, effective and early tracking of first contact tracing was thoroughly mapped.

The Agra model is important because it has proved effective in areas of high case density, which are being referred to as "hotspots". Agra was also the earliest reference to community transmission in an official statement. Community transmission is said to have happened when cases start being detected where there are no clear indications of travel history to an affected country, or of contact with a confirmed positive case. Experts such as AIIMS director Dr Randeep Guleria are now talking about "localised community transmission" in hotspots.

In a statement on March 5, the Health Ministry said: "Since, in addition to COVID-19 cases related to travel, some cases of community transmission have also been observed, it has been decided to involve district collectors and States have been asked to form rapid response teams as the district, block and village levels."

Bhilwara model

Rajasthan's Bhilwara was one of the early hotspots for COVID-19. It has now spotlighted itself with a "ruthless containment strategy", also being described as the "Bhilwara model".

According to a March 26 report by the

district collector's office, the first positive case in Bhilwara, reported on March 19, was a doctor at a private hospital. By March 26, the number of positive cases at the hospital was 17, all of them hospital staff and patients. The outbreak emerged as a massive crisis for the Rajasthan government as the doctors, before testing positive, had communicated with several people, including nursing staff and patients.

The city was completely isolated with Section 144 CRPC being imposed. In the first phase, essential services were allowed; in the second phase, there was a total shutdown with the city and district borders sealed and checkpoints set up at every entry and exit point. All trains, buses and cars were stopped. The District Magistrates of neighbouring districts too were asked to seal their borders. The containment zone is usually 3 km around the epicentre, and the buffer zone is 7 km.

The containment and buffer zones were turned into 'No-Movement' zones and cluster mapping was done for COVID-19 cases. Through this, six areas were identified and special teams were deployed for continuous screening of suspected cases. The containment and buffer zones, all ambulances and police vehicles, the screening centre and quarantine centres, the Collectorate, Police Line and other public-dealing offices were

disinfected on a daily basis.

At last count, 3,072 teams in Bhilwara had surveyed 2,14,647 households comprising 10,71,315 people and found 4,258 cases of influenza-like illnesses that had to be tested for COVID-19. Four private hospitals were acquired with 25 isolation beds each. Quarantine centres were set up in 27 hotels with 1,541 rooms, which eventually housed 950 people, while 7,620 people were kept in home quarantine.

There was door-to-door supply of essential groceries, fruits, vegetables and milk. Raw and cooked food packets were distributed to the needy and there was a complete shutdown of industries, factories & brick-kilns.

Bhilwara currently has about 28 cases, according to Health Ministry data.

Pathanamthitta model

Technology has been the hallmark of the Pathanamthitta model in Kerala. The district saw its first cases in early March, when a three-member Italy-returned family ended up infecting several relatives while socialising with them. The count would eventually go up to 16.

Border sealing and contact tracing happened here too. But more than just screening contacts, every person who had entered the district was screened and a database created so that they could be easily reached at short notice. In addition, graphics were created showing the travel route of the positive cases and publicised. This included details of all places the family had travelled to, and the potential contacts they would have made there between February 29 and March 6.

This helped in self-reporting. As people realised from the route maps that they had indeed come in contact with a COVID-19 positive person, many walked up to be screened or treated.

Those under quarantine were checked daily on phone through a call centre even as 14 teams of health workers monitored some 4,000 people who had entered the district before its sealing.

There was also an app — Corona RM — designed by engineering students of IHRD College, Chengannur. Those under home quarantine were monitored through this app as their whereabouts could be tracked and if they broke quarantine that could be immediately detected through the use of GP.

The growth of new cases has slowed down in Kerala, with six of the last 10 days witnessing a single-digit rise.

Why 'false negative' tests are a concern

How does virus escape detection in a patient, then show up again days later? The science, the implications

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS
 PUNE, APRIL 12

THERE HAS been concern about the manner in which some COVID-19 patients have apparently relapsed. Only days after testing negative, they have been confirmed positive a second time. In Pune, a woman in her sixties tested negative, then fell critically ill with the infection three or four days later, and subsequently died.

Are these fresh infections? Doctors do not rule out the possibility that these patients had not rid themselves of the virus in the first place, but the virus didn't show up in the tests. This is called "false negative".

Why it happens

No lab test is 100% accurate, said Dr Marc-Alain Widdowson, Director at the Institute of Tropical Medicine, Antwerp, and formerly with US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He has researched the subject of

false negative tests.

"The tests based on detection of genetic material are very sensitive, but yes sometimes are negative," Dr Widdowson told *The Indian Express*. "It can be because the swab was not taken right or the test was run badly, or sometimes simply because the virus may shed in different amounts, and was not there in the nose at that time. If the infection is in the lung, then a nose swab may not detect it. To be confirmed negative after being positive... you normally need two negative swabs 24 hours apart to be sure."

In 2003, Dr Widdowson had done a study on SARS that showed respiratory swabs can be negative, but faeces positive; so the virus can exist in the body even if not in the nose at a given time.

Dr Harlan M Krumholz, professor of medicine at Yale University, wrote in an opinion piece in *The New York Times* that an initial swab sample may not always collect enough genetic material to provide an accurate test. This problem may arise more often in pa-

tients who do not show many symptoms at the time of their test.

This is an indication that lessons are still being learnt, according to Dr Subhash Salunkhe, chairman of the Maharashtra state technical committee on preventing communicable diseases.

Need for caution

With limited public data on false negative rate in the clinical setting, we must regard each test result that is negative in a guarded fashion, Dr Salunkhe said.

The test can be negative if the sample is not obtained or processed correctly or even obtained too early, said a scientist at the National Institute of Virology. "All tests suffer from false positive and false negative errors. We are constantly battling with positive and negative predictive values," said epidemiologist Prof Jayaprakash Mulyil, who also observed that finding coronavirus on a person who died does not mean that the person died of the virus.

False security

In a special article in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, experts have flagged another concern — the risk that over-reliance on COVID-19 testing can pose to clinical and public health decisions. "A negative test often does not mean the person does not have the disease, and test results need to be considered in the context of patient characteristics and exposure," said Dr Priya Sampathkumar, an infectious diseases specialist at Mayo Clinic.

The authors stress it's important for public health officials to stick to principles of evidence-based reasoning regarding diagnostic test results and false-negatives. "For truly low-risk individuals, negative test results may be sufficiently reassuring. For higher-risk individuals, even those without symptoms, the risk of false-negative test results requires additional measures to protect against the spread of disease, such as extended self-isolation" said Dr Colin West, a Mayo Clinic physician.

How a dollar swap line with US Fed can help in uncertain times

SUNNY VERMA
 NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

INDIA IS working with the United States to secure a dollar swap line that would help in better management of its external account and provide extra cushion in the event of an abrupt outflow of funds, according to banking industry and government sources.

India already has a \$75 billion bilateral currency swap line with Japan, which has the second highest dollar reserves after China. The Reserve Bank of India also offers similar swap lines to central banks in the SAARC region within a total corpus of \$2 billion.

What are the benefits of a swap line?

While India is largely expected to tide over any challenge posed by continued outflows of funds from the markets, a swap line with the US Federal Reserve provides addi-

tional comfort to the forex markets. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) have been large sellers in the Indian equity and debt markets in March and April so far, as concerns over the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has hit investor sentiment.

Even as the stock markets have seen a pullback from earlier low levels, there is apprehension that the economic impact of COVID-19 will last for a significant length of time, and there is unlikely to be any V-shaped recovery in the economy or in the financial markets.

This means that the government and the RBI cannot lower their guard on the management of the economy and the external account.

Are India's foreign exchange reserves enough?

In roughly a month, India's foreign exchange reserves have fallen by nearly \$13 bil-

lion — from an all-time high of \$487.23 billion on March 6 to \$474.66 billion as on April 3, as per the latest data reported by the RBI.

Despite the slump in global crude oil prices and reduction in imports due to the pandemic outbreak, a sharp outflow of funds resulting from foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) looking for safer havens amidst the current global uncertainty, has pulled down India's foreign exchange reserves.

After a smooth run during which India's foreign exchange reserves rose week-on-week for nearly six months, they started to decline in March. FPIs invested a net of Rs 58,337 crore, or nearly \$8 billion, between September 2019 and February 2020.

According to RBI data, 63.7% of India's foreign currency assets — or \$256.17 billion — are held in overseas securities, mainly in the US treasury. Some forex market participants believe that the country's reserves at this stage — which are roughly equivalent

to 12 months of import requirements — are sufficient to tide over any difficulty.

How does a swap facility work?

In a swap arrangement, the US Fed provides dollars to a foreign central bank, which, at the same time, provides the equivalent funds in its currency to the Fed, based on the market exchange rate at the time of the transaction. The parties agree to swap back these quantities of their two currencies at a specified date in the future, which could be the next day or even three months later, using the same exchange rate as in the first transaction.

These swap operations carry no exchange rate or other market risks, as transaction terms are set in advance. The absence of an exchange rate risk is the major benefit of such a facility.

Does India have a swap line with any

other country?

In 2019, India signed a \$75 billion bilateral currency swap line agreement with Japan, which has the second largest dollar reserves after China. This facility provides India with the flexibility to use these reserves at any time in order to maintain an appropriate level of balance of payments or short-term liquidity.

Last November, to further financial stability and economic cooperation within the SAARC region, the RBI put in place a revised framework on currency swap arrangement for SAARC countries for 2019-22.

This facility originally came into operation on November 15, 2012 to provide a backstop line of funding for short-term foreign exchange liquidity requirements or balance of payment crises until longer term arrangements were made. Under the framework for 2019-22, RBI will continue to offer a swap arrangement within the

overall corpus of \$2 billion. Other countries can withdraw funds in the US dollar, the euro, or the Indian rupee.

With which countries does the US have swap lines?

On March 19, 2020, the Fed opened temporary swap arrangements with the central banks of Australia, Brazil, Denmark, South Korea, Mexico, Norway, New Zealand, Singapore, and Sweden, to be in place for at least six months for a combined \$450 billion.

The Fed already has permanent swap arrangements with the Bank of Canada, the Bank of England, the European Central Bank, the Bank of Japan, and the Swiss National Bank. Other large economies including India, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa — all part of the G-20 grouping — currently do not have a currency swap line with the US.



The Indian EXPRESS

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

April's cruel dilemma

Efficacy of universal lockdown isn't completely endorsed, nor is there indisputable evidence to suggest it is optimal response



ARUNA SUNDARARAJAN

AS THE COUNTRY approaches the end of its nationwide lockdown on April 14, one question dominates national discourse: Should India extend the lockdown? Never before has India confronted a public policy dilemma that impacts the lives and fates of millions so critically.

A number of states have already announced extension of the lockdown till the end of the month; more are expected to do so. It would appear that the lockdown is likely to get extended by two more weeks, calling to mind TS Eliot's haunting line about April being the cruellest month.

Can India afford such an extension, seeing the costs so far? What are the trade-offs involved?

In the first flush of the pandemic, when the world's experts and governments were scrambling to come to terms with its etiology and effects, as well as the appropriate policy response, many countries, including India, opted to erect a barrier of containment by locking down the population. The trade-off seemed simple enough — a choice between saving lives or livelihoods. Unsurprisingly, every country, barring Sweden, chose to save lives. This set a powerful precedent for India.

However, as days pass, the trade-off is looking increasingly complex and open to challenge, given the life-threatening consequences that look likely if the lockdown is extended, unless massive relief and support are forthcoming from the government, ensuring access to livelihoods and sustenance for all.

In making the decision, one must acknowledge that much has changed since the epidemic first struck.

We are now in a much better position to understand the trajectory of the disease, as well as to have a fair assessment of the impacts and limitations of lockdowns and social distancing. We now know, for example, that in place of a one-size-fits-all lockdown, there can be graded containment strategies that can be fine-tuned against three vectors: Geographic, depending on the varying locational intensity of the disease; vulnerability-oriented, with differing containment strategies for more vulnerable sections like the aged; and sectoral, with a more liberal containment regime in place for essential activities like agriculture.

A significant number of reputed global health experts, who have spent decades studying epidemics, are beginning to question the validity of initial assumptions about the nature of the illness, and the efficacy of radical remedial strategies such as lockdown.

We can no longer go solely on the basis of international precedent. Nor can our sole consideration be to halt the pandemic, no matter the cost. India's present lockdown has been rated as the severest in the world and the most disruptive by far, impacting a seventh of the world's population. Whatever decision we take, we must keep foremost the impact of the lockdown on the poorest and the most vulnerable: For it is they who are likely to bear the brunt.

While we know that the COVID pandemic is much more infectious and more virulent than the flu, it is also a widely accepted fact that viral epidemics abate only when around 60-80 per cent of the population acquires "herd-immunity" — either by vaccination or by acquiring the disease.

Lockdowns can indeed reduce mortality rates by flattening the infection curve, thereby ensuring an even distribution of cases. But much depends on how effectively we are able to use the intervening time available — to train personnel as well as procure the requisite devices, supplies and protective equipment, amongst other things.

Recent global experience also teaches that the timing of the lockdown is critical. Unlike what is intuitively believed, early lockdowns are known to be suboptimal because they merely postpone the peak, but do not reduce the numbers. Many countries have imposed lockdowns only when infections peaked to levels that threatened to swamp the capacity of their healthcare systems.

Based on the trajectory so far, there is also fair likelihood to suspect that India, like other tropical countries, may be experiencing a less virulent epidemic than seen in the west; either due to higher natural immunity, or vastly different demographics. Some countries around us, like Pakistan, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Japan etc appear thus far also to be having a relatively flatter disease trajectory at present. Most of Africa does not seem to have entered the epidemic phase.

One-size-fits-all lockdowns are similar at this point to an experimental one-shot drug; with potentially unknown and possibly undesirable side effects. The efficacy of universal lockdowns is by no means completely endorsed, nor is there indisputable evidence to suggest that it is an optimal response.

Whereas countries initially had only the Wuhan model of containment to go by as precedent, we now have a wide spectrum of responses and strategies — ranging from India's

total lockdown to Sweden's largely non-interventionist, voluntary social distancing. In between, we have countries like Korea that have followed a strategy of aggressive, widespread diagnostic testing and isolation coupled with social distancing, as well as others that have imposed highly limited geographic and demographic containment protocols.

We also now know that several leading global health experts have questioned the numbers projected in the initial studies and forecasts as being inordinately high. These experts have urged greater conservatism and caution before radical, society-altering methodologies like universal lockdowns are extended. Some are even arguing that the earlier a population acquires herd-immunity, the better the outcomes of the disease. It is incumbent that our experts and advisors present the decision-makers with the full facts, the latest knowledge and insights and a broader array of options rather than merely a single option; namely, to extend or not extend.

Economists and social scientists have already drawn attention to the possible impacts of a prolonged lockdown on India's economy and the lives and livelihoods of the vast majority, as well as the emergent need for massive relief and fiscal stimulus to get the economy rebooted. Reports have highlighted the unprecedented surge in unemployment levels, emerging widespread farm and rural distress, and incipient starvation even as harvests wilt in the fields. Food and medical supply chains are broken in parts, and even hospitals are closed in a few small towns, at a time when their need has never been greater.

This is all happening a mere two weeks into the lockdown. Further decisions on the relief and stimulus packages that are awaited, may yet hopefully mitigate to some extent the losses. Any amount of relief notwithstanding, the costs are bound to be substantive and disproportionately high for those who can least afford it.

Given the momentousness of the decision, it is incumbent that it is guided by extreme circumspection and informed by a clear-eyed, realistic cost benefit analysis arising from our own and global experience; so that we are not caught in a proverbial chakravayuh from which there is no exit.

Most importantly, any decision must be preceded by the wisest possible public consultation. For, collective knowledge and reason alone can illumine these dark times.

The writer is a retired civil servant

HARVESTING REFORM

Dealing with coronavirus could have a silver lining: It could help remove undue restrictions on movement of farm produce

EVER AS THE 21-day lockdown till April 14 appears set to be extended by two weeks, both the Centre and the states are agreed that the blanket restrictions on production and movement will not apply to farm-related work. Agriculture would, indeed, be the most significant, if not the only, economic activity the country might see at least till the end of this month. The government's focus, too, will now have to be as much on the rabi crop's harvesting and marketing as on keeping the war against the novel coronavirus going. But harvesting per se is unlikely to be a problem. The bulk of the mustard, *chana* (chickpea), *masur* (red lentil), sugarcane, potato and rabi onions have already been harvested. It's only wheat and some seasonal vegetables (the likes of bottle gourd, okra, brinjal and cucumber) and fruit (mango and melons) that are still in the fields. Harvesting of rabi maize, summer *moong* (green gram) or even Dasheris, Chauns and Langra mangoes will only be after May.

Simply put, harvesting will happen. Farmers will somehow manage, whether by using combines (whose movement and deployment, both inter- and intra-state, has been exempted from the lockdown) or labour (including those forced to return to villages after being rendered jobless in factories and urban centres). The challenge is going to be with the crop's marketing. There are two major issues here. The first is the *mandis*, which are normally a hive of activity at this time, when farmers in thousands bring their trolleys-loads of produce to sell. Given the imperative of social distancing, that is ruled out today. Even if farmers were to come, there aren't enough labourers in wholesale markets — predominantly from states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, who have fled back home — to unload, clean, bag and reload their crop. The second issue is the collapse of demand. With hotels, restaurants, caterers and most agro-processing units shut, the market cannot absorb a bumper crop — a situation similar to that during April-June 2017 post demonetisation. Then, it was lack of cash. Now, it is lack of institutional buyers.

What is the way out? If overcrowding at the *mandis* is not to be allowed, farmers have to be given some incentive for not bringing their entire harvested crop straight from the field. There is a strong case to give, say, a bonus of Rs 50 over the minimum support price of Rs 1,925 per quintal for wheat that is sold after April 30 and Rs 100 if after May 30. Not only will this enable staggered crop arrivals, there would also be interest savings for the Food Corporation of India through reduced drawdown of cash credit limits. This is also the time for the Narendra Modi government to enact an omnibus law to remove all restrictions on sale, stocking, movement and export of farm produce. Coronavirus can do for agriculture what 1991 did for industry and services.

UNSC AND COVID

Deepening tensions between US and China preclude any agreement on what Security Council can do in current crisis

ANY EXPECTATIONS THAT the United Nations Security Council would respond decisively to the spread of the coronavirus that has killed more than 1,00,000 people across the world, were belied as soon as the members met for their first consultation during the crisis last week. While the meeting was the first ever to be held via video, its outcome, or the lack of it, was quite predictable given the deepening divide between the US and China on a range of issues starting from the question of naming the virus.

Through the month of March, when China held the rotating chair of the presidency of the Security Council, Beijing stalled any discussion of the crisis. It was only when the Dominican Republic took over the chair in April that a "discussion" of the international situation triggered by the virus became possible. But collective action was certainly not on the anvil. The US called for greater transparency and insisted that the "most effective way to contain this pandemic is through accurate, science-based data collection and analysis of the origins, characteristics, and spread of the virus". China, in contrast, rejected the focus on the origin and spread of the virus as "scape-goating". It called, instead, for expanded international cooperation and touted its own success in controlling the virus and support to other nations in fighting the pandemic. The Council heard out the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, who presented a grim picture of the crisis and its consequences for international peace and security. But there was no agreement on what the UN could do.

The UN Security Council was to work as a concert of its five permanent members. Agreement among the five veto-wielding powers is critical for any collective action. If the issue is about the actions of a P-5 state, there is, unsurprisingly, little room for progress. Barring a few years after the end of the Cold War, consensus among the great powers has been elusive. And over the last decade, the tensions between US and China have steadily deepened. Moscow, facing problems of its own with Washington, has aligned itself with Beijing. As President Donald Trump moves closer to the re-election battle and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, strives to fend off blame for the handling of the crisis, conflict between the two powers is likely to acquire a sharper edge. It's by no means certain that the UN and its various agencies, including the World Health Organisation, will come out of this unscathed.



GEETANJALI KALA

WHEN I ARRIVED at the Delhi airport on the last flight from London, after the Indian government had issued a travel ban, the world had already known much about the deadly COVID-19 from the experiences of people in China and other affected countries. Visuals of the Chinese response to the pandemic — a temporary 1,000-bed hospital built in a matter of days, for example — were telling. The WHO had declared the outbreak a pandemic. We knew about the virility of the coronavirus, even when Iran and Italy were just about emerging as new epicentres.

India had substantial time in hand to learn from the data and practices of other affected countries. But the first travel advisory from the government — informing people that travellers from China be quarantined — was issued as late as February 5. And, it wasn't before March 2, that the government began looking at travellers from other countries as potential carriers.

I landed in Delhi on the night of March 18-19. By this time, the UK had seen a surge in its cases. The fact that the country sits right next to continental Europe, and did not have travel restrictions for EU nationals, should have been a good enough sign that travellers from the UK were a potential risk. But we were cleared to go home after a thermal

CITIZENS IN THE DARK

We must act responsibly, but government must also answer



ONE OF 800 MILLION

A VOICE, UNDER 35

It is important to note that at no point at the airport, I — or anyone else standing ahead of me in the queue — was told to self-isolate at home... a little nudge from the authorities would have helped, especially when we cannot afford to take any chance.

screening. Most COVID-19 infections in India have spread from people who have travelled from abroad and did not show symptoms at the time of being screened at the airport. If having cleared the thermal test, some travellers assume themselves to be virus-free, can we blame them?

It is important to note that at no point at the airport, I or anyone else standing ahead of me in the queue was told to self-isolate at home. We are, of course, expected to be informed, but a little nudge from the authorities would have helped, especially when we cannot afford to take any chance. A concerned woman standing ahead of me in the queue to submit the self-declaration form wanted some information on how to self-isolate. She also asked if her domestic help could visit her during this period. While she was still at the desk trying to process the information she had received, and possibly wanting to know more, the official at the desk started attending to the next person in the queue — this, when there was no rush at the airport.

What options did people have when they were asked to go home? Even with all the good intentions of self-isolating themselves, they possibly had no option but to use buses and trains to reach their final destinations in

other cities. A lot of people could afford paid quarantine facilities but there was no information at the airport about any such arrangements.

A number of studies have indicated the significant role of asymptomatic infections in the spread of COVID-19. These asymptomatic cases are different from cases which are yet to show symptoms, or "preclinical cases". Such people carry the infection, but never show symptoms. In them, the virus goes undetected unless tested. In fact, one study, published in *Nature* on March 20, also found that the viral shedding capacity of an asymptomatic infected individual was as potent as that of people who have the infection and show symptoms. Therefore, the importance of quarantine cannot be overstressed.

People with secure jobs and savings are braving the lockdown without much of a problem. However, the poor are bearing the brunt of the restrictions. The lockdown was, of course, much needed, but it could have been better managed.

Everyone must take ownership of the crisis. But, as citizens, it is also important to ask questions of our governments.

The writer teaches and is a researcher at the University of Westminster, UK

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



APRIL 13, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

ASSAM TALKS FAIL
TALKS BETWEEN PRIME Minister Indira Gandhi, and Assam student leaders on the foreigners' issue have failed but both sides are keeping the door open. At her news conference, Mrs Gandhi said that 1971 was not a cut-off year but a starting point to initiate the process of identifying foreigners. The student leaders, who addressed a news conference in the afternoon, said the Prime Minister did not tell them that 1971 was the starting year but if she were to do so formally "the matter would be considered". Their contention was that 1971 was mentioned as a base year but not as a starting point. The atmosphere of optimism that

had built up after hearing about the prime minister's visit to Gauhati has transformed into gloom.

LIBERIAN COUP
A COUP LED by a national guard staff sergeant toppled the government of Liberian president William Tolbert and Tolbert died in the overthrow. Liberian radio broadcasts said it was the first such overthrow in the 133-year history of the nation founded by US slaves which was one of the West's closest allies in Africa. Radio Monrovia, monitored by West German radio, said Tolbert, who would have been 67 in May, was killed during the fighting.

FIGHTING CONGRESS (I)
DEVARAJ URS, CONGRESS President and Charan Singh, Lok Dal President, discussed the coming assembly elections and the question of seat adjustments in various states. Both leaders have reportedly agreed on the need for a national alternative with all concerned parties combining to fight the Congress (I). Charan Singh pointed out that the people wanted such a national opposition party. Both Singh and Urs felt convinced that there should be a straight contest between the Opposition as a whole and the Congress (I) in the upcoming elections — wherever it was possible.

9 THE IDEAS PAGE

Connections and divisions

Epidemic diseases do not occur outside of a human context. This is why understanding their history is so important



CHRISTIAN MCMILLEN

I AM A historian. I don't predict the future. And I generally don't write about the present. But my knowledge of the past, especially past epidemics and pandemics, means I cannot help but draw eerie parallels between the past and the present. For example, in 1851, when the French delegate to the International Sanitary Conference spoke about cholera's spread around the planet, he could almost have been talking about our world in 2020: "Add now the communications between the peoples, today so numerous and more and more rapid; the navigation by steamship, the railways, and on top of that this happy tendency of the populations to visit each other, to mix, to merge, a tendency that seems to make of different peoples a sole and large family, and you will be forced to admit that for such a disease, so widespread and under these conditions, cordons and quarantines are not only powerless and useless, but they are, in the very great majority of cases, impossible."

Decades later, as the pandemic flu made its way around the world, in 1918, reactions in many places bear a striking resemblance to contemporary responses to coronavirus. When influenza first appeared in Bloemfontein, South Africa, initial reactions were muted. The city considered itself so healthy that a local guidebook called it the "South African sanatorium". So confident was the city in its ability to ward off ill health that in early October, while the flu was killing people in West Africa, the local newspaper wondered how dangerous could "our friend the ordinary common or garden influenza, be?" They soon had an answer as bodies piled up and hospitals became overwhelmed.

While historians do not predict the future, when it comes to epidemics and pandemics, any historian would almost certainly agree that another one was coming. Because epidemics and pandemics have been part of human history for millennia, there are many things that their histories can teach us. But in our current moment, a few will suffice.

For one, epidemics and pandemics force us to reckon, again and again, with the obvious fact that the natural — or non-human — world has a powerful effect on the human world. At the same time, we must keep in mind that there is nothing natural about why infectious diseases strike when they do or why they affect one place or people and not another. As David Arnold wrote about cholera in mid-19th century India, "Like any other disease, it has in itself no meaning: It is only a micro-organism. It acquires meaning and significance from its human context, from how it infiltrates the lives of the people, from the reactions it provokes, and from the manner in which it gives expression to cultural and political values."

Take cholera. While there is strong evidence that cholera had been an epidemic in India in the 18th century, it was not until the 1820s, that it travelled the globe. Key developments in world history made this possible: British colonialism increased travel and trade between the East and the West; railway lines continued to link huge swaths of



CR Sasikumar

previously unconnected space such as the Mediterranean and Red Seas; the opening of the Suez Canal accelerated the pace of travel between parts of the globe; increased urbanisation across Europe — the reasons go on. While influenza's lethal effects in 1918 were surely because of the strain's peculiar virulence, it could not have spread as it did even 20 years before.

The point might be obvious, but it's one I want to stress: Epidemic diseases do not occur outside of a human context. This is why understanding their history is so obviously important.

Epidemics and pandemics always have a disproportionate effect on the poor and the marginalised. We have known this for centuries. Writing of the plague in Marseilles in 1720, a doctor wrote the following about a neighbourhood spared of the pestilence: "The streets are wide, the houses large, and inhabited chiefly by persons living in a state of opulence, and such are always the last attacked by a contagion, on account of the means they have to place themselves out of its reach." We will see this play out, tragically, as COVID-19 inevitably makes its way into the places least able to contain it. When cholera began to make its way out of India in the 1820s, "it," as the historian Mark Harrison wrote, "defined the contours of a new world economy, revealing its connections and also, more starkly, its divisions." The same will be true of the coronavirus.

Since the laboratory revolution of the late 19th century, and especially since the invention of antibiotics and other "miracle drugs" in the years after World War II, we have over-relied on technology and biomedicine to keep us safe while at the same time we have steadily dismantled any semblance of a robust public health infrastructure. The result has been overconfidence and unrealistic promises about the demise of disease — seen most recently in US President Donald Trump's unsubstantiated claim that chloroquine would cure coronavirus. In the past century, and in our current one, a dangerous side effect of medical progress has been an irresponsible optimism. For example, the 1918 pandemic arrived at a time when modern medicine was armed with newfound confidence regarding its ability to discover the causes of diseases and then offer cures. Yet, before the development of a vaccine in the 1930s, when it was identified as a virus, modern medicine was utterly defenceless against influenza.

By the end of the fall of 1918 and into the winter of 1919, medical professionals began to reflect on their inability to control the epidemic. Some simply said they had no idea what caused influenza. One official at

New York City Department of Health wrote that "The real cause, I am afraid, we must admit to be some vagary of plant life beyond our ken up to the present time." So ineffective was modern medicine that Alfred Crosby, one of the first historians of the pandemic, called it the "greatest failure of medical science in the twentieth century or, if absolute numbers of dead are the measure, of all time."

None of this diminished the optimism associated with scientific medicine. With the discovery of antibiotics in the 1940s, confidence in medicine only accelerated. Walsh McDermott, a prominent TB and international health expert, claimed in the early 1960s that because of antibiotics the control of TB "is one of the few instances to date in which a major disease can be decisively altered without having to await improvement in the social infrastructure." And in 1973, Frank MacFarlane Burnett, a Nobel prize winner in biology from Australia, wrote that because infectious diseases had largely been done away with — "one of the immemorial hazards of human existence has gone."

But, of course, this kind of optimism was wildly misguided. For one, even in 1973, lurking and ready to take off, was one of the most devastating infectious diseases in human history — HIV/AIDS.

None of this means that drugs or medical research are not essential for the control of epidemics. Anti-retroviral therapy, an extraordinary discovery by any measure, has been essential in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Yet, access has been uneven. Since its discovery in the 1960s, oral rehydration therapy for cholera has been lifesaving. But it does nothing to address the reasons why millions of people in the global south are drinking faeces-infested water. TB can be cured with antibiotics, yet we have more TB now than at any other time in world history. The very simple point — made by many others — is that there is a relationship between disease and social conditions, conditions that will not be alleviated with biomedicine.

No historian could have predicted the current coronavirus pandemic. But most historians of epidemics and pandemics are likely unsurprised by some of its key features: The power that the natural world still holds over human life; the disproportionate effect of pandemics and epidemics on the poor and the marginalised; and the over-reliance on biomedicine to the exclusion of a robust public health infrastructure.

The writer is associate dean for the social sciences and professor of history, University of Virginia

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"A holiday from the lockdown would provide no welcome break, whatever the weather. On the contrary, it would be a dereliction of our common responsibility to maintain physical distancing." — THE GUARDIAN

After the fire-fighting

Use the COVID crisis to transform the agri-marketing system



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH BY ASHOK GULATI

IT IS PAINFUL to see the Worldometer displaying the number of deaths globally due to COVID-19 racing towards six-digit figures, with Italy and the US topping the list with the five-digit figures. In India, the number of deaths is still in the low three digits. But we don't know the true extent of infection and deaths as our testing is limited. So far, India has tested a little over one lakh people against a total population of 1.35 billion. Our cumulative testing number is today roughly the same as the US tests every day. Each day the US is discovering lots of new patients and recording an increasing number of deaths. The figures from China are always suspect as there is no free media or people's voice.

It is well known now that the Chinese knew about this virus in November/December when one of their own doctors, Li Wenliang, turned whistleblower. But his voice was muzzled and Li himself died from the virus. But the episode indicates that the authoritarian nature of the Chinese regime is a misfit in the globalised world of the 21st century. It is interesting that in China, even asking a simple question as to how much grain stock there is in the country can land you in trouble because grain stock figures are state secrets!

In India, we take pride in our democracy, no matter how flawed it is. It is the media, the fourth pillar of democracy, that raised the issue of migrant labourers when the prime minister suddenly announced a 21-day lockdown in the country. The front-page images of stranded migrant workers, walking long distances to their homes, made it clear that the administration was not prepared. They are now reacting to this crisis which has led to large-scale destitution. Better late than never.

Interestingly, the central government even went to the Supreme Court to ask for a control on media reports that are creating panic. Anything that is not palatable to the government can be "panicky". Luckily, the Court did not side with the government. It is due to the strength of our democratic setup, with a free media, that Independent India never faced any large-scale starvation deaths, unlike the 1943 Bengal famine which claimed anywhere between 1.5 and 3 million lives. This needs to be juxtaposed with China's authoritarian regime under Chairman Mao — 30 million people starved to death during the Great Leap Forward (1958-61), and the world did not know much about it because of the absence of a free press.

However, what the Indian media has still not flagged is the brewing trouble in

villages. Most of these migrant workers come from farming families. Because of significant disruption in supply chains as a result of the lockdown, farmers are stuck with a large amount of produce, especially of perishables like milk, fruits and vegetables, flowers and even poultry meat and eggs. Due to this glut, farm prices are collapsing, pushing farmers into destitution. Many of them are dumping milk and vegetables on the roads. With the procurement season for rabi crops having started, the mandi system will choke, and social distancing will go for a toss if immediate steps are not taken to organise procurement operations in an orderly manner. The wisdom lies in converting this crisis into an opportunity for reforming the agri-marketing system. Here are a few suggestions that may help to put the agri-system on an efficient path.

One, abolish/reframe the APMC Act and encourage direct buying of agri-produce from farmers/farmer producer organisations (FPOs). The companies, processors, organised retailers, exporters, consumer groups, that buy directly from FPOs need not pay any market fee as they do not avail the facilities of APMC yards. Two, the warehouses can also be designated as markets, and the warehouse receipt system can be scaled up. The private sector should be encouraged to open mandis with modern infrastructure, capping commissions. Three, futures trading should be encouraged by allowing banking finance to hedge for commodity price risks.

Four, promote e-NAM through proper assaying and grading the produce and setting up dispute settlement mechanism; rope in major logistics players for delivery of goods. Five, procurement must be staggered through coupons and incentives that give farmers an additional bonus for bringing produce to the market after May 10, or so. And six, the amount provided under PM Kisan should be increased from Rs 6,000 to at least Rs 10,000 per farming family to partially compensate them for their losses.

Besides these, I feel, as the leader of the largest democracy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi would benefit by taking a leaf out of the book of President Donald Trump. Modi should lead from the front by holding daily press briefings and announce a country-wide relief package amounting to around 8-10 per cent of GDP. Once the fire-fighting is over, India needs to evaluate the WHO's role in this fiasco. The January 14 tweet from the WHO stated: "Preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the novel #coronavirus (2019-nCoV) identified in #Wuhan, #China." This now appears bizarre and misleading.

Whatever the causes of this disaster are, it is clear that the WHO failed in its duty to raise the alarm in time. India must ask for fundamental reforms in the UN System, including the WHO, making it more transparent, competent, and accountable.

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIR

Epidemics and pandemics force us to reckon, again and again, with the obvious fact that the natural — or non-human — world has a powerful effect on the human world. At the same time, we must keep in mind that there is nothing natural about why infectious diseases strike when they do or why they affect one place or people and not another. As David Arnold wrote about cholera in mid-19th century India, "Like any other disease, it has in itself no meaning: It is only a micro-organism. It acquires meaning and significance from its human context, from how it infiltrates the lives of the people, from the reactions it provokes, and from the manner in which it gives expression to cultural and political values."



VALMIK THAPAR

Press restart

A moment of rebuilding is on us. Best minds must contribute

I AM BEMILDERED. In the last 30 years, the leadership of this world has been incompetent and negligent. They have strutted around like immortals. Country after country has hammered nature and avoided dealing with climate change and global warming. Seldom have targets and commitments for preventing environmental disaster been achieved and super powers like the US have even pulled out of their past climate change agreements. China, over these decades, encouraged their wildlife markets and the trade in animal species both for medicinal and food purposes. They were warned many times about mutating viruses and their possible impact, but chose to ignore.

The natural world over the last three decades has been devastated. And over these decades, our business leaders and their greed focused only on the so-called economy, and every year they ran off to Davos to restate their mission. Yes, this super rich community lost the plot. They just could not give back to nature, their only desire was to take. People like Bill Gates are exceptions. Our global leaders are inspired by big business. It has become the new mantra of life and everyone aspires for more. Nature gets increasingly exploited. Then suddenly the corona missile explodes. It mutates from the Wuhan wildlife market in China and envelops the world. Life stops. The Davos dream vanishes. Thousands die, and economies

gasp for breath. There are no supermen to fight this monster. Mortality is high, borders are sealed. A deathly quiet. Nature's revenge, or the first serious warning to life on earth — look at it as you will. The world will never be the same again.

Will the world ever learn? Will we stop the billions spent on war games and the arms race? Can we restart our lives in simpler ways after this virus fades? Do we have a design for living where the aspiration for super-luxury does not determine either what we do or how we do it? Can we hold each other's hand in times of need without burrowing in our selfish holes? Can we create a new era that gives back to nature? Can we give our billions to ending the horrors of new viruses we have created by our never-ending exploitation? Can we even have a dialogue across the world with a more human face and with real truths, not deception? Can we review and rewrite the charters of the United Nations and WHO? They have not only failed us but their bureaucracies need to be retooled in order to face the crisis we are in. They have been completely inadequate in both their preparation and articulation.

Our past is full of ugly and monstrous deeds. If we go on as we have done new viruses will destroy all of humanity. We need to restart our planet in a vibrant and innovative way. Let us never forget that those who

are fighting this virus to survive are those who created it in the first place by their short-term twisted priorities and goals. Hopefully, some of them have learnt a lesson. Hopefully, the macabre wildlife markets will close forever. Hopefully, our billions, instead of going waste on war games, will go into scientific research that prevents future viruses. It must go in non-invasive solutions that reduce green house gases and global warming. Sadly, it is after death and suffering that pollution levels are down and the air quality is better. Less exhaust fumes and CO2 are being pumped into the air. There are no planes flying. But all this should have been the norm without the horrors of this virus. Hopefully, when this is over, the natural world will get its due.

Let me now focus on India. It will take a few months of rigorous curfew to deal with the first wave of this deadly disease. Maybe the heat will help. It gets hotter each day. Heat creates virus instability. As soon as it settles, we will require our Prime Minister to bring in an era of reconciliation between political leaders and their parties. Non-partisan governance and policy is the need of the hour. By this time, we would be teetering on economic collapse that could cause serious law and order issues. If the Nyaya scheme in the Congress manifesto is the best, then we must implement it. All forces will have to unite. Our electronic media must stop the nonsense it

spews and the bizarre conflict and bickering it encourages. It will not be a moment for those who spew conflict and violence. They will have to be quarantined forever. We need the best minds in every party to work under the Prime Minister and we need the best ideas to restructure and restart our engines. People will want peace after this war. Nobody is interested in the ridiculous verbal brawls, and the nasty sarcastic remarks between parties and politicians or the horrors of our mischievous electronic media. It will be a moment for rebuilding and an opportunity to design a new way to progress into the future.

It no longer matters how severe our virus wave is. When it settles, we will desperately be searching for a new beginning, new solutions that are non-invasive and protect life on earth. The best minds in every field, irrespective of their political leanings, will have to come together for it. That kind of team effort has to be led by the prime minister who must unite one and all and lead from the front. We must reconcile our differences, unite, govern without divides and be prepared to use this moment to deliver a new India. The world is literally gasping for breath. We all need a new kind of oxygen — a new design for living. Without it we will go nowhere.

Thapar is author of Tigerfire and has spent nearly 40 years working with wild tigers

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TRUMP'S FAULT

THIS IS WITH reference to the editorial, 'WHO in the middle' (IE, April 10). No doubt, the WHO's role in handling the outbreak has been far from effective in any manner. But President Donald Trump's accusation of the WHO being the sole reason for America's miseries is simply not acceptable. Despite warning from the authorities, Trump downplayed the pandemic. If anything is to be blamed for the US's predicament, it is the blotched response of the Trump administration in dealing with the crisis. Vidhya B. Ragunath, Thanjavur

RISE AND FALL

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Let it fall' (IE April 10). The Indian currency at an all time low, hovering at around 76.6 against US dollar and our foreign reserves are falling. But we could use this opportunity to climb the ladder and acquire our share in world business. With limited imports and crashing oil prices, we could put aside our import fiscal for the time being. Our pharmaceutical industry was valued at \$33 billion in 2017 and generic drugs account for 20 per cent of global exports in terms of volume, making the country the largest provider of generic medicines globally. With increasing demand all over the globe for cheap and generic drugs, India could use this opportunity to increase its ambit of supply. Mayank Pant, Haldwani

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.

PRIVACY MATTERS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'After the storm passes' (IE, April 10). While the article makes sound arguments about protecting privacy during the current crisis, some key practical aspects of ensuring this need to be answered. In times like ours, jumping on the bandwagon of a supposedly majoritarian view peddled through a colossal network of a largely compliant media that is all too happy to use evocative labels like "anti-national" and "traitors" to crush dissent is common. If a narrative were to be peddled to ask citizens to give up their right to privacy as a service to the nation, what safeguards would the minority of dissenters then have? Kushal Khandhar, Mumbai

10 THE OUTBREAK THE WORLD

PANDEMIC WATCH



Julian Assange

UNITED KINGDOM
Assange secretly fathered two children: Partner

London: Julian Assange secretly fathered two children while living inside the Ecuadorian embassy in London, his partner has revealed as she filed a bail plea in a UK court to seek his release amid growing health fears due to the coronavirus pandemic. Stella Moris, who gave birth to Gabriel, 3, and Max, 1, after what she said was a "strong intellectual and emotional bond" developed with Assange, said there were now genuine fears for his health as he remains behind bars at Belmarsh prison in London fighting extradition to the US on espionage charges.

IRAN
With 117 new deaths, toll rises to 4,474

Tehran: Iran on Sunday announced 117 new deaths from the coronavirus, bringing the official toll to 4,474, even as it eased some restrictions that had been imposed to slow the spread of the illness. Health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour also told a press meet that 1,657 new infections had been confirmed in the past 24 hours, taking the total to 71,686. Iran has carried out 263,388 tests for the virus so far, he added. Of those confirmed to be infected and admitted to hospitals, 43,894 have recovered and been discharged, while 3,930 are in a critical condition.

NEPAL
Three Indian nationals test positive for virus

Kathmandu: Three Indian nationals, who entered Nepal from India for a religious mass gathering and were staying at a mosque in the southern part of the country, have tested positive for the novel coronavirus, the health ministry here said on Sunday. The three Indian men, aged 37, 44 and 55 years, were staying at the mosque in Birgunj city, 135 kilometres south of the capital Kathmandu, due to the nationwide lockdown which has been extended by another eight days till April 15.

US toll tops 21,000 — highest globally

REUTERS
NEW YORK, APRIL 12

AMERICANS SPENT Sunday on lockdown as the US toll from the novel coronavirus pandemic surpassed 21,300 deaths and more than half a million confirmed cases over the Easter weekend.

The grim milestone was reached as President Donald Trump mulled over when the country, which has registered more than half a million infections, might begin to see a return to normality. The US has seen its highest death tolls to date in the epidemic with roughly 2,000 deaths a day reported for the last four days in a row, the largest number in and around New York City. Even that is viewed as understated.

Public health experts have warned the US death toll could reach 200,000 over the summer if unprecedented stay-at-home orders are lifted when they expire at the end of the month.

Most curbs, however, including school closures and emergency orders keeping non-essential workers largely confined to home, flow from powers vested in governors, not the president.

Nonetheless, Trump has said he wants life to return to normal as soon as possible and that the measures aimed at curbing the spread of the COVID-19 disease carry their own economic and public-health cost. Speaking by telephone with Fox News on



SAYING HELLO: A boy and his mother look at her sister's newborn baby through a glass door while dropping off a bag of supplies in Brooklyn, New York City. Reuters

Saturday evening, Trump said he would make a decision "reasonably soon," based on the advice of "a lot of very smart people, a lot of professionals, doctors and business leaders." He said "instinct" would also play a role.

In New York, the state's governor and New York City's mayor engaged in a fresh squabble over their efforts to combat the virus in what is now the global epicentre, in this instance over how long schools might stay closed.

On Saturday morning, Mayor Bill de Blasio declared that New York City's public schools would no longer reopen on April 20 but stay closed for the rest of the academic year, saying it was "the right thing to do."

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, however, later used his widely watched daily news conference to dismiss the mayor's edict as merely an "opinion," and say he would make his own decision on school closures.

HCQ SHIPMENT FROM INDIA REACHES U.S.

Washington: A consignment of hydroxychloroquine from India has reached the US, the global COVID-19 hotspot, days after New Delhi lifted a ban on the export of the anti-malarial drug to America and some other countries on humanitarian grounds. "Supporting our partners in the fight against COVID-19. Consignment of hydroxychloroquine from India arrived at Newark airport today (Saturday)," India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu tweeted. Trump has bought more than 29 million doses of hydroxychloroquine for potential treatment. PTI

Trump was warned early, often: Behind his halting response

MICHAEL D SHEAR
NEW YORK, APRIL 12



Donald Trump

TOP WHITE House advisers as well as experts deep in the cabinet departments and intelligence agencies all sounded alarms and urged aggressive action to counter the threat from the coronavirus, but President Trump remained slow to respond, a detailed examination of the government's response found.

Trump's views were coloured by long-running disputes inside the administration over how to deal with China and his own suspicion of the motivations of officials inside what he viewed as the "Deep State." The State Department's epidemiologist warned early that the virus could develop into a pandemic.

Peter Navarro, the president's top trade adviser, wrote a searing memo at the end of January saying that in a worst-case scenario, 30 percent of the population in the US would be infected with the virus, leading to the deaths "on the order of a half a million American souls."

In recent days, Trump has denied he saw the memo at the time. But *The Times* report reveals aides

raised it with him at the time and he was unhappy that Navarro had put his ideas in writing.

By the third week in February, the administration's top public health officials had concluded that it was time to begin shifting to a more aggressive strategy to mitigate the spread of the virus. But they never got the chance to present the plan to the president. An official at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention went public with dire warnings too soon, sending stocks tumbling and angering Trump.

It would be three more weeks before Trump recommended aggressive social distancing guidelines, a period when the virus spread largely unimpeded and the task force was trying to avoid alarmist messages like the one that had angered the president. NYT

EXPLAINED
A need to use the right metrics for COVID figures

WITH THE reportage of daily death counts from across the globe, there is a need to ensure that these figures are analysed using the right metrics. Experts say there is a need to keep in mind different population sizes, health systems, the level of testing carried out and the fact that the "real" numbers are suspected to be much higher. Not doing so could lead to incorrect/fake conclusions that could lead to significant harm in trying times.

Virus mutes Easter celebrations as Europe death count hits 75,000

BILLIONS AROUND the world celebrated Easter Sunday from lockdown at home as the pope urged solidarity to fight the coronavirus pandemic and the European death toll from the virus topped 75,000. A look at some developments in Europe:

ITALY
Italy on Sunday reported its lowest coronavirus death toll in more than three weeks, confirming trends showing that the COVID-19 outbreak in Europe's worst-hit nation had peaked. The 431 new deaths reported by the civil protection service were the lowest since March 19. Italy's death total now stands at 19,899.

SPAIN
Spain is "far from victory" in its fight against the coronavirus, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez warned on Sunday as the country's death toll rose again after falling for three days in a row. The nation registered 619 new deaths in the last 24 hours, bringing the death toll to 16,972.



A lone woman in a church in Spain on Easter Sunday. Reuters

the health ministry said. The toll was 510 on Saturday, the lowest since March 23. But the number of new infections continued its slow, rising by 4,167 to 166,019, a smaller increase than was recorded on Saturday.

FRANCE
In France, newly reported coronavirus deaths fell by one-third from Friday to 635 on Saturday. "A very high plateau for the epidemic appears to have been reached, but the epidemic remains very active," said French health official Jerome Salomon, urging people to remain vigilant.

VATICAN CITY
Speaking from a near-empty Saint Paul's Cathedral, Pope Francis' Easter Sunday message was largely focused on the pandemic, offering prayers for the ill and urging a united European front. He called for European "solidarity" in the face of the virus, adding: "After the Second World War, this beloved continent was able to rise again." AFP



AT THE WESTERN WALL

Only a few worshippers were present during the priestly blessing, a traditional prayer which usually attracts thousands of worshippers at the Western Wall on the holiday of Passover, in Jerusalem's Old City on Sunday. Reuters

UK PM discharged; concern as toll hits 10,000

AGENCIES
LONDON, APRIL 12

BRITISH PRIME Minister Boris Johnson was discharged from hospital on Sunday, a Downing Street spokesperson said, a week after being admitted for treatment for coronavirus.

Health officials say 657 more people in England have died from the coronavirus, raising the total UK deaths over 10,000.

Johnson, 55, was admitted to St Thomas' hospital, in London, on last Sunday — 10 days after testing positive for the virus.



A person prays at the closed doors to Westminster Cathedral on Easter Sunday.

He had three nights in intensive care before returning to a

ward on Thursday. "On the advice of his medical team, the PM will not be immediately returning to work. He wishes to thank everybody at St Thomas' for the brilliant care he has received," a spokesperson said.

Meanwhile, Johnson's government came under mounting pressure to explain why the death toll was rising so fast. Britain has reported two days in a row of hospital deaths increasing by more than 900 people. Friday's death toll of 980 surpassed the highest recorded in a single day in Italy.

The British government has had to defend its response,

which has included carrying out far less testing than in some other European countries and ordering a lockdown that came comparatively late.

Health minister Matt Hancock suggested during a BBC radio interview on Saturday that Britain's daily death toll had exceeded Italy's because it had a bigger population. The UK population is about 66 million while Italy's is 60 million.

When asked why Germany, with a population of about 83 million, had much lower numbers, he said: "The German situation is one I look at a lot."

OTHER TOP GLOBAL STORIES

Afghan Taliban confirm release of govt prisoners

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KABUL, APRIL 12

THE TALIBAN announced Sunday it will be releasing 20 Afghan government prisoners the group has been holding, in the first phase of its commitment under its historic peace deal with the United States.

The deal calls for the government to release 5,000 Taliban prisoners in exchange for 1,000 government officials held by the Taliban. The Afghan government released its first 100 Taliban prisoners last week and Jawed Faisal, a spokesman for Afghanistan's national security adviser, said the government has thus far released

300 Taliban prisoners overall from government custody.

Suhial Shaheen, a spokesman for the Taliban's political office, said in a tweet that the first government prisoners will be handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross in southern Kandahar.

The exchanges come after the Taliban met with the head of US forces in Afghanistan to call for an end to what they say is an increase in American attacks since a peace deal was signed in February, allegations the US military denied. On Saturday, a US military spokesman called on the Taliban to stop attacking Afghan security forces.

Bangladesh executes former Army officer for assassinating Bangabandhu

ANISUR RAHMAN
DHAKA, APRIL 12

BANGLADESH ON Sunday executed a former military captain for his involvement in the 1975 coup in which the country's founder Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated, nearly four-and-a-half decades after the high profile massacre.

Abdul Majed was hanged at 12.01 am (local time), Law Minister Anisur Huq told PTI. An official of the Dhaka Central Jail at Keraniganj on the outskirts of the capital said that a doctor declared Majed dead at 12.15 am.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was killed in 1975. AP File

Inspector General of Prisons Brigadier General AKM Mostafa Kamal Pasha at a media briefing in front of the jail said that the body would now be handed over

to the family members for burial. "Concerned officials who were required to witness the execution under law were present," he said, adding this was the first case of execution since the Dhaka Central Jail was relocated at the newly-built facility at Keraniganj two years ago.

A number of people had gathered in front of the jail at midnight, defying COVID-19 restrictions, he said, adding that Majed was executed by hanging. Majed was arrested in Dhaka on Tuesday after hiding in India for nearly two-and-a-half decades. On Friday, Majed's wife and four other relatives met him

for nearly two hours in the prison. President Abdul Hamid on Thursday rejected his mercy plea, removing the last hurdle for his hanging.

A specialised police unit arrested Majed, one of the fugitive convicted Bangabandhu assassins, as he returned home after hiding for nearly two and half decades in India. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said the "self confessed killer" was not only involved in Bangabandhu's assassination but also took part in the subsequent killing of four national leaders in high security Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975. PTI

Gantz request for more time to form govt denied

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JERUSALEM, APRIL 12

ISRAEL'S PRESIDENT ON Sunday rejected parliament speaker Benny Gantz's request for more time to form a government, as talks persist on a possible interim alliance with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Ex-military chief Gantz was given the mandate to form a government four weeks ago by President Reuven Rivlin following Israel's March 2 election, the country's third inconclusive vote in a year.

Then in a surprise move last month, Gantz was elected speaker of Israel's parliament, or

Knesset, and pledged to seek an emergency unity alliance with Netanyahu to ease the political deadlock and help the country tackle the pandemic.

While his mandate to form a government runs until the end of Monday, Gantz was no longer actively engaged in talks to forge a coalition led by him as prime minister.

Instead, he was widely believed to be pursuing a unity deal that would see Netanyahu remain as premier for a defined period, possibly then handing power to Gantz.

Despite reports of progress from the two sides — and from Israeli media — no deal has been agreed upon.

ECONOMY

MARKET WATCH

FPIs PULL OUT ₹9.1K CR IN APR SO FAR

New Delhi: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pulled out a net Rs 9,103 crore from the Indian markets in April so far as the Covid-19 crisis triggered a return to safe haven assets like gold and dollar-denominated securities. **PTI**

TRUCKS BEING OFF-ROADED, DEARTH OF LABOUR HITS FMCG MANUFACTURERS

As FMCG makers struggle with logistics, private labels & local brands get a break

PRANAV MUKUL & AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

AT A time when large national fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) brands are facing difficulties producing and transporting manufactured items to the last mile, private labels and lesser-known regional brands have found space on shelves at homes and kirana shops.

FMCG manufacturers have been facing logistical issues on account of more than 90 per cent of India's trucks getting off the roads, as well as lack of enough labour affecting manufacturing processes.

"There are some challenges in securing sufficient supplies due to production shortages from manufacturers or transportation of the products to our locations, but we are working closely with our suppliers and with the local authorities to minimise and address these challenges. In order to ensure that

EXPLAINED

Companies now offering white label products

MOST OF the white label companies manufacture products for other bigger brands, and sell their own items on a very small scale in areas near their production units.

As the bigger FMCG companies have been unable to procure the finished goods from these smaller units, they have started offering the finished products in label and company less packages to shops across Delhi and surrounding areas.

our members can seamlessly procure essential items across categories, we have also ramped up new product development in our private brands segment and fast-tracked commercialisation of products such as sanitizers, liquid washes and bulk packs of staples," a Walmart spokesperson said.

Similar steps are being taken by online grocers too. Bikram

Singh Bedi, president—strategy and new initiatives, Grofers, said recently that the Gurgaon-based online grocer has stepped on the gas pedal for its private label.

"We have ramped up manufacturing significantly (for our private label). With this, we are able to ensure that any shortage of supplies from large national brands is supplemented with our private labels. In times like

this, direct control over supply with the manufacturer helps," Bedi pointed out.

Smaller mom-and-pop stores and kirana shop owners are also struggling with acquiring stocks of well-known brands.

"We had ordered around 50 sacks of 5 kg atta (wheat flour) of a well-known brand. Earlier, the stock used to last a week before we had to order again. This time around, it sold out within an hour. And now that brand's distributor has asked us to wait at least 15 days before the next stock comes," a grocery chain shop owner in Greater Noida said, adding that locally packed wheat flour was being stocked at his shop for the time being.

The condition is the same for other items, such as rice, biscuits and even jam. Many big brands such as Dabur India and ITC have expressed difficulties in procuring raw materials and supplying finished goods to the market.

Another grocery shop owner in East Delhi said that some local brands have started pushing

their products to shopkeepers, and because of lack of top brands, products like biscuits, jam, tomato ketchup, etc. of even lesser-known brands were selling like hot cakes.

As of April 6, Dabur India had reported logistical issues, and had said that while the central government had issued guidelines to ensure smooth passage of goods, the implementation on ground was still short of the mark. "Proper implementation of these guidelines on the ground would ensure seamless movement across states and enable timely delivery of these essential products to end-consumer households across India," Shahrukh Khan, the company's executive director of operations, had then told *The Indian Express*.

Executives at other MNCs said that they were trying to on-board more local suppliers and white label production units to overcome the logistical challenges of sending their own product to all markets of the country.

DESPITE CLEARANCES TO NEARLY 30 FIRMS FOR AROUND 40 KITS

Lack of crucial components, delay in overseas regulatory nods hinder progress on testing kits

PRABHA RAGHAVAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

INDIA MAY have the capacity to mass manufacture rapid antibody diagnostic kits to test for COVID-19, but a shortage of crucial elements such as the synthetic copies of the virus and its antibodies leave it dependent on other countries to assemble these test kits in a bid to scale up testing.

Here, too, a flurry of clearances given to around 30 companies—including Mylan Pharma, Cadila Healthcare, SD Biosensor and Triviron Healthcare—for nearly 40 rapid antibody test kits over the span of a month, almost entirely imported, haven't sped up India's testing process. Administrative requirements in other nations and the severity of the outbreak in India compared with others have caused uncertainty over whether the country may be able to get sufficient kits soon.

Among the companies with approved test kits, only a handful such as Vanguard Diagnostics' rapid card test have reportedly been developed within the country, but the company did not reveal its total manufacturing capacity. "We are in the process of getting ready for the rapid kits and would not like to make a comment at the moment," said Veena Kohli, MD, Vanguard Diagnostics.

Rapid diagnostic antibody tests—done either through rapid card tests, chemiluminescent immunoassays IgG and IgM (CLIA) and enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays (ELISA)—only tell whether a person tested has antibodies against COVID-19. This means they cannot confirm whether the person currently has the virus through RT-PCR tests can. Yet, these kits cut down testing time by many hours, allow for several samples to be tested in a go and have been considered a beneficial tool to ramp up testing here.

For instance, a CLIA test will allow for around 100 samples to be tested together in the span of an hour, allowing for one machine to churn out 1,500 results in a day,

COMPANIES WITH COVID-19 TESTS APPROVED IN INDIA	
NAME OF COMPANY	TYPE(S) OF RAPID ANTIBODY TEST APPROVED BY CDSCO
Mylan/Matrix Labs	Antibody rapid test IgG/IgM, CLIA test
Cadila Healthcare	Antibody rapid test IgG/IgM
Triviron Healthcare	Antibody rapid test IgG/IgM, CLIA
Vanguard Diagnostics	IgG/IgM antibody detection card test
CPC Diagnostics	CLIA test
HLL Life Care	'Makesure' rapid test
Alere Medical	Antibody rapid test IgG/IgM
SD Biosensor	Fluorescent rapid antigen test

Source: CDSCO, NIV

said V Gopinathan, vice president—Marketing & Planning, CPC Diagnostics. The company is currently waiting on 1.4 lakh CLIA test kits from a manufacturer in China, but its consignment is stuck due to the Chinese regulator's recent decision mandating exporters to receive its approval before shipping these products.

Dr GSK Velu, MD, Triviron Healthcare, said that cartridges for rapid antibody card tests can be easily manufactured in India. However, it is difficult for companies to meet local demand at this stage due to a lack of the COVID-19 protein—a man-made copy of the virus (antigen) that helps determine whether the person has developed antibodies.

"Indian companies are looking at producing this (rapid tests), but we are a few weeks behind, because the COVID-19 proteins (used in these tests) are not available in India. Some companies are trying to create this protein, but that is also taking some time," he told *The Indian Express*. The company is trying to source the protein from countries like China and Canada so as to tweak its rapid card tests for HIV and use it to test for COVID-19 here.

"This is a very new disease. Nobody has gone into the production of its antigens yet. Some people are trying to do it for vaccines... we are trying to talk to a few companies in India who are try-

ing to get into vaccines for COVID-19 also, but nothing has been finalised yet," he added.

Similar issues arise where CLIA and ELISA tests are concerned, say experts.

"Several companies are working on these rapid tests, but it will take around 1-2 months for these to come out, because it will take time to develop the reagents, viral protein and even additional antibodies required to trace whether the patient's sample has developed COVID-19 antibodies," said a scientist, requesting anonymity.

According to experts, developing these antibodies itself is a long process that would take around 2-3 months despite the government's shortened approval timelines. "China and other countries are ready with these antibodies because the outbreak started there months ago and they have had all this time to synthesise them," they said.

No company in India manufactures the machines to perform CLIA tests, according to Gopinathan. "The automated analyser (machine that analyses the samples) are manufactured by 8-9 manufacturers around the world in countries like Japan, USA, European countries and China," he said, adding, "It is a closed system. There is a technology limitation, because very few companies have the R&D strength required to replicate the equipment."

BRIEFLY

Gold ETFs witness inflows in 2019-20

New Delhi: Investors infused over Rs 1,600 crore in gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs) in 2019-20, after pulling out money for the last six financial years, as the coronavirus outbreak spurred safe-haven buying. The inflows meant asset under management (AUM) of gold funds surged by 79 per cent to Rs 7,949 crore at the end of March 2020, from Rs 4,447 crore in March-end 2019, data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed. Over the last few years, retail investors poured more money into equities as compared to gold ETFs, mainly on account of decent returns.

PNB to retain stake in two life insurance cos

New Delhi: State-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) will retain stake in two life insurance ventures as the lender has got permission from Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai). Following the merger of Oriental Bank of Commerce on April 1 with PNB, 23 per cent of stake of the former in Canara HSBC OBC Life Insurance stands transferred to latter. Already, the state-owned lender is a promoter of PNB Metlife Insurance with the highest stake of 30 per cent since 2012. **PTI**

Green certificate sales up 79% to 8.38 lakh in March

Sales of RECs rose over 79 per cent to 8.38 lakh units in March, as against 4.68 lakh in the same month a year ago



5.2 lakh
Number of RECs traded on the Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) in March, compared to 2.25 lakh in year-ago month

HIGH SUPPLY
Both non-solar and solar RECs witnessed supply at the two power exchanges in March:

- Buy bids for 6.93 lakh RECs
- Sell bids for 26.84 lakh RECs
- Buy bids for 3.73 lakh RECs
- Sell bids for 5.59 lakh RECs

OVERALL BIDS

- Buy bids for 10.66 lakh RECs
- Sell bids for 32.43 lakh RECs

WHAT ARE RECs?
Renewable energy certificates

3.18 lakh
Number of RECs traded on the Power Exchange of India (PXIL) last month, as against 2.43 lakh in March 2019

(RECs) are a type of market-based instrument. One REC is created when one megawatt hour of electricity is generated from an eligible renewable energy source

REQUIREMENT UNDER RPO
Under the renewable purchase obligation (RPO), bulk purchasers like discoms, open access consumers and capacitive users are required to buy certain proportion of RECs

Source: IEX/PXIL/PTI

Chinese central bank's stake in HDFC crosses 1%, worth around ₹3,000 crore

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

CHINA'S CENTRAL BANK, the People's Bank of China (PBoC), has raised its shareholding in Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) to over one per cent in the recent stock market slump.

According to BSE data, PBoC now holds 17.49 million shares, or 1.01 per cent, of HDFC equity capital at the end of the March 2020 quarter, according to a disclosure by HDFC.

At the current market price of Rs 1,701.95 per share, the value of the Chinese central bank's stake is close to Rs 3,000 crore.

HDFC vice chairman & CEO Keki Mistry said PBoC has been an existing shareholder and had owned 0.8 per cent in the com-

pany as of March 2019. "The disclosure has been made now since the stake has hit the one per cent regulatory threshold. They have been accumulating the shares over a year and are now holding 1.1 per cent"

KEKI MISTRY
VICE CHAIRMAN & CEO, HDFC

correction last month. HDFC is India's largest mortgage firm in the private sector, with a loan book at Rs 4,41,472 crore as of December 2019.

As much as 70.88 per cent stake in HDFC is held by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs). Invesco Oppenheimer holds 3.33 per cent, while the Government of Singapore holds 3.23 per cent. Life Insurance Corporation, which holds 4.67 per cent stake in HDFC, is the largest Indian shareholder.

PBoC is the central bank of China responsible for carrying out monetary policy and regulation of financial institutions, and its foreign exchange reserves are estimated to be around \$3.06 trillion.

Chinese companies and banks had acquired stakes in several companies in Europe and the US in the last couple of years.

Amid poor cash flow and impending loan obligations, rough ride ahead for India Inc

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

AS IT exits 2019-20, India Inc's biggest challenge in the months ahead will be redeeming bonds and meeting other loan obligations at a time when cash flows will be hard to come by. Corporate bonds worth approximately Rs 92,000 crore and commercial paper worth around Rs 78,000 crore are coming up for repayments towards the end of May.

The three-month breather on loan repayments—to banks and NBFCs—will help but only temporarily; given how highly leveraged companies are, deterioration, in what are already very fragile balance sheets, can't be ruled out. The recent spate of

VIRUS SHOCK TO HIT EXPENDITURE

■ The shock from the COVID-19 pandemic will hurt spends on both discretionary items and capital goods

■ A survey of corporate houses showed that 80% of manufacturing companies had over a month's inventory when the lockdown took effect

downgrades—more than a dozen a day in the last three months—has made banks even more risk

averse and except for the top-tier players, few can hope for fresh lines of credit.

Early Q4FY20 results are an indication of how disruptive the pandemic can be. At Titan, for instance, revenues from the jewellery segment were down 5 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) for the March quarter, but revenues in January and February had risen by 16.5 per cent y-o-y. At Marico too, the India business reported a low single-digit fall in volumes in the quarter, with much of the damage being done in March.

One survey of corporate houses showed that 80 per cent of manufacturing companies had more than a month's inventory when the lockdown took effect.

Sectors such as automobiles, construction materials and met-

als have seen their volumes fall sharply, while realisations are down for metals and upstream oil companies. With the economy now estimated to grow only at a nominal 5-6 per cent in 2020-21, or a real rate of 1-2 per cent, corporate India is in for a rough ride.

The shock from the COVID-19 pandemic will hurt spends on both discretionary items and capital goods as layoffs and pay-cuts ravage the economy.

Data from CMIE shows that unemployment spiked to over 23 per cent as of April 5, versus the 6-8 per cent range pre-pandemic; in rural India it increased to 20 per cent, while in urban areas it soared to 31 per cent. That will send private consumption plummeting, notwithstanding any stimulus the government might unveil. **FE**

OPEC, Russia approve biggest ever oil cut amid coronavirus pandemic

REUTERS
BAKU/DUBAI/LONDON, APRIL 12

OPEC, RUSSIA and other oil producing nations agreed on Sunday to cut output by a record amount, representing around 10 per cent of global supply, to support oil prices amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The group, known as OPEC+, agreed to lower output by 9.7 million barrels per day (bpd) for May-June, after four days of marathon talks and following pressure from US President Donald Trump to arrest the price fall.

Two OPEC+ sources told Reuters the deal had been sealed in a video conference on Sunday, and the agreement was confirmed in a statement from by Kazakhstan's energy ministry.

In the biggest oil output cut ever, the countries will keep gradually decreasing curbs on production in place for two years until April 2022.

Measures to slow the spread of the coronavirus have destroyed



OPEC, Russian and other oil producing nations—also known as OPEC+—agreed to lower output by 9.7 million barrels per day for May-June. *File*

demand for fuel and driven down oil prices, straining budgets of oil producers and hammering the US shale industry, which is more vulnerable to low prices due to its higher costs.

Trump had threatened OPEC leader Saudi Arabia with oil tariffs and other measures if it did not fix the market's oversupply problem as low prices have put the US oil industry, the world's largest, in severe distress.

OPEC+ has said it wanted producers outside the group, such as

the United States, Canada, Brazil and Norway, to cut a further 5 per cent or 5 million bpd.

Canada and Norway had signalled willingness to cut and the United States, where legislation makes it hard to act in tandem with cartels such as OPEC, said its output would fall steeply by itself this year due to low prices.

The signing of the OPEC+ deal had been delayed since Thursday, however, after Mexico balked at the production cuts it was asked to make.

SLOWEST SINCE ECONOMIC REFORMS THREE DECADES BACK

World Bank sees FY21 India growth at 1.5-2.8%

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, APRIL 12

INDIA IS likely to record its worst growth performance since the 1991 liberalisation this fiscal year as the coronavirus outbreak severely disrupts the economy, the World Bank said on Sunday. India's economy is expected to grow 1.5 per cent to 2.8 per cent in the FY21 (which started on April 1, the World Bank said in its South Asia Economic Focus report.

It estimated India will grow 4.8 per cent to 5 per cent in the 2019-20 fiscal that ended on March 31. The COVID-19 outbreak came at a time when India's economy was already slowing due to persistent financial sector weaknesses, the report said.

To contain it, the government imposed a lockdown, shutting factories and businesses, suspending flights, stopping trains and restricting mobility of goods and people.

In its South Asia Economic Focus report, the World Bank saw the region—comprising eight countries—growing by 1.8-2.8% this year, down from the 6.3% it projected six months ago

"The resulting domestic supply and demand disruptions (on the back of weak external demand) are expected to result in a sharp growth deceleration in FY21 (April 2020 to March 2021)," it said, adding that the services sector will be particularly hit.

A revival in domestic investment is likely to be delayed given enhanced risk aversion on a global scale, and renewed concerns about financial sector resilience.

"Growth is expected to rebound to 5% in Fiscal 2022 (2021-22) as the impact of COVID-19 dissipates, and fiscal and monetary policy support pays off with a lag," the World Bank said.

The World Bank joins a cho-

rus of international agencies that have made a similar cut in growth estimates in recent days on concerns about the COVID-19 outbreak. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) sees India's economic growth slipping to 4 per cent in the current fiscal, while S&P Global Ratings has further slashed its GDP growth forecast for the country to 3.5 per cent from a previous downgrade of 5.2 per cent.

Fitch Ratings puts its estimate for India growth at 2 per cent, while India Ratings & Research has revised its FY21 forecast to 3.6 per cent from 5.5 per cent earlier.

Moody's Investors Service has slashed its estimate of India's GDP growth during 2020 calendar

CII suggests calibrated reopening of sectors based on geographies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

INDUSTRY CHAMBER Confederation of India Industry (CII) on Sunday suggested a "slow and staggered" approach to reopening various sectors based on classification of geographies as red, amber and green, depending upon the incidence of COVID-19 cases.

Textiles and apparels, pharmaceuticals, food processing, minerals and metal, besides e-commerce, chemicals and automobiles are the key sectors that need to restart operations in a calibrated manner, as per a report by CII. However, prior to the lifting of the lockdown, there has to be adequate notice given to all and also the announcement of an economic package, the industry body said in a statement.



MOTOR RACING GREAT MOSS DIES
Stirling Moss, the British racing driver who ranked as an all-time Formula One great despite never winning the world championship, died on Sunday at the age of 90 after a long illness.

ATP warns of unsolicited help

Tennis authorities caution players from joining the initiative of a French firm for creation of a solidarity fund

SHAHID JUDGE
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

ON THE evening of April 5, world no. 438 Sidharth Rawat got an email from the ATP. It was a cautionary message, warning the player that a company in France may try to get in touch with him to provide him financial help during the time that the professional tennis circuit is on hold. That email is said to have been sent to every player on the men's tour.

"When I first saw the message from the ATP, I thought they were warning us about something similar to those fraud mails that keep coming about somebody who wants to give us money and all they need is our bank account," Rawat says. "I haven't been approached by this company at all. I only got to know of its existence, or that it even has this kind of scheme, when the ATP sent that message."

In the letter, the ATP writes that the company Atton & Price claims to be starting a 'Tennis Solidarity Fund' and says it's working closely with the tennis governing bodies.

"The letter implies that the ATP, WTA, and ITF are working with Atton & Price to form this fund, but that is not correct. While each of ATP, WTA, and ITF are exploring options for the financial support of our respective player members during this difficult time, we have no affiliation with Atton & Price," read the ATP's letter. "During this time, we expect that you will be approached with various offers for financial relief. We recommend that you be cautious and confirm the legitimacy of any unsolicited approaches that you receive before you decide to pursue them."

The tour has been suspended since March 12 due to the coronavirus pandemic, leaving players without the income they would have earned as prize money through tournaments.

This lack of funds has, in particular, been problematic to the lower-ranked players who do not earn as much as those competing in the upper tiers of the sport.

Subsequently, world no. 375 women's singles player from Georgia, Sofia Shapatava had also started an online petition to appeal to the ITF to provide financial assistance to lower-ranked players.



Georgia's Sofia Shapatava, ranked 375 in the world, has appealed for financial assistance to lower-ranked players. AP

Claiming to ease the stress on these players, Atton & Price reportedly started approaching them. The management company was started just over two months ago and intend to provide funds to players ranked from 50 to 500. According to French newspaper *L'Equipe*, the company's initiative requires at least 100 players to sign a petition, which will then help the company claim 20 million euros from the tennis authorities, which would then be distributed among the players.

Subsequently, the ATP sent the cautionary email to all its players.

"The whole thing has been absurd," says India no. 4 and world no. 281 Sasikumar Mukund, who has also not been approached by Atton & Price. "Players are well protected by the ATP, so it's a bit surprising that people actually managed to approach players in this way. At the same time, if this is all fraudulent, it's really sad that people are doing this at such a time

During this time (period of lockdown), we expect that you will be approached with various offers for financial relief. We recommend that you be cautious and confirm the legitimacy of any unsolicited approaches that you receive before you decide to pursue them."

ATP'S LETTER TO PLAYERS

when everyone is suffering." Soon after the ATP's email, the company released a statement from its president Eric Brimberg, a wealth manager, and his business partner Olivier Roumelian, a business lawyer. "Atton & Price reiterates that its action is intended to help those who need it and that all of

the people who have adhered to it and continue to adhere to or support it are not bound by any legal or financial obligation," reads the statement reported by *L'Equipe*.

The company further asserted that they will be looking to collect a fund from private sponsors which they will distribute among players. Meanwhile, former world no. 18 Vijay Amritraj asserted that players will have no choice but to endure this lockdown phase.

"The unfortunate issue is, like every other independent contractor or business in the world, you are not covered for anything. The ITF, ATP, WTA, they are all independent bodies that are pretty much non-profit," he told *The Indian Express* last week. "They don't have large cash reserves like various governments may have to support the system. This is a high-risk venture the moment you step into it, which is where we are all stuck unfortunately."

TRACKING THE VIRUS

JEJE COMES TO THE RESCUE OF PEOPLE IN NEED OF BLOOD

INDIAN FOOTBALL team striker Jeje Lalpekhlua has come to the rescue of people in dire need of blood when it is not readily available in Mizoram due to the extraordinary situation arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic. India is under a three-week lockdown enforced to contain the novel coronavirus and given the current situation, it is set for a two-week extension.

"Due to the lockdown blood units are not readily available nowadays. So the hospital connected with the Young Mizo Association is seeking help. The news reached me and I knew immediately what I needed to do," the 29-year-old stated.

"You cannot keep quiet and sit idle during such circumstances." He immediately rushed to the Synod Hospital in Durtlang, Mizoram to donate blood. "Upon receiving the information we chalked out our plan. We headed to the hospital from the Durtlang branch of YMA. Out of 33 who had reported, 27 were deemed fit to donate," Jeje informed. "It's not about me or someone else, it's about the human race that needs to fight together now, more than ever." The Young Mizo Association (YMA) is the largest non-governmental voluntary organisation which operates primarily in Mizoram and some parts of the other north-eastern states as well.

"It is so satisfying that I have been able to play a minor role. I thank the Almighty for giving me the strength." This is not the first time that Jeje has been involved in philanthropic activities. He has time and again rose to the cause in Mizoram whenever the situation has demanded.

KNOCK, KNOCK, IT'S NICK: KYRGIOS DELIVERS FOOD

AUSTRALIAN TENNIS star Nick Kyrgios has apparently followed through on a promise to help people going hungry in the coronavirus shutdown, with social media images showing boxes of essential items prepped for deliv-



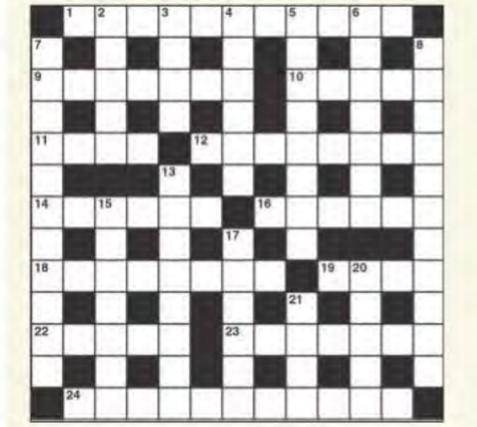
Nick Kyrgios' Instagram feeds were replete with images showing boxes of essential items prepped for delivery.

ery. The controversial Kyrgios, infamously outspoken and known for his fiery on-court antics, said on Monday he would personally drop food on doorsteps after COVID-19 restrictions closed down entire industries, forcing huge numbers of people out of work across Australia. People queuing for welfare payments across the country have been likened to scenes from the Great Depression.

"Please don't go to sleep with an empty stomach," Kyrgios, the world number 40, posted on Instagram Monday. "Don't be afraid or embarrassed to send me a private message. I will be more than happy to share whatever I have. Even just for a box of noodles, a loaf of bread or milk. I will drop it off at your doorstep, no questions asked!" He said in a post that attracted almost 100,000 likes. His mother, Norlaila Kyrgios, posted on Instagram over the weekend a photo of a table laden with food — including bread, fruit and canned goods — with the caption "dining room or food distribution centre".

Images of Canberra-based tennis star's Instagram stories shared on News Corp websites showed boxes of essentials captioned "deliveries in progress". It comes just months after the 24-year-old led a bushfire relief campaign that raised millions of dollars. Kyrgios gave AUD 200 (\$125) for every ace he hit across his home tennis summer, which ran until the end of the Australian Open. **AGENCIES**

CROSSWORD 4090



- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Does it produce ticker tape? (11) | 2 A Caledonian place of course (5) |
| 9 Bill given by a retailer (7) | 3 A barrel to tap (4) |
| 10 See Sue going out with a mean person (5) | 4 He's not at home with legal rules (6) |
| 11 Strikes may result when this is put out (4) | 5 Advanced in a rush, but thought better of it (8) |
| 12 He prefers people of good taste (8) | 6 Is he an artisan of some depth? (7) |
| 14 Arrived like rural gentry (6) | 7 He may develop a light stoop from bending over clinical cases? (11) |
| 16 Wild herb we brought back from Israel (6) | 8 Tropical disease that may make one feel very low (6,5) |
| 18 Showy rogues go wrong (8) | 13 Money put in bank lately (8) |
| 19 Area of Palestine (4) | 15 Dealing with someone with a complaint (7) |
| 22 Tongue of land surrounding a lake that's overflowed (5) | 17 Foreign office (6) |
| 23 A heavenly intervention? (7) | 20 It may be cut and pickled (5) |
| 24 Unfair gossip? (4,7) | 21 A number given to someone to sing (4) |

Solutions Crossword 4089: Across: 1 Raised, 4 Forfeits, 9 Tithes, 10 Stunning, 12 Logs, 13 Brief, 14 Flee, 17 Standing army, 20 Close pursuit, 23 Tote, 24 Knots, 25 Item, 28 Travesty, 29 Polite, 30 Chessman, 31 Meagre. Down: 1 Ruthless, 2 Integral, 3 Ewer, 5 On the warpath, 6 Fund, 7 Icicle, 8 Signed, 11 Frank Sinatra, 15 Idols, 16 Smart, 18 Hurling, 19 Stampede, 21 Static, 22 Strafe, 26 Keys, 27 Gone.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given clue.

Treat a work of art _____. Let it speak to you first. - Arthur Schopenhauer (4,1,6)

LVAEE	AAUCLN
□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □
DGIIR	CITUKP
□ □ □ □ □	□ □ □ □ □

SOLUTION: LEAVE, RIGID, LACUNA, UPTICK

Difficulty Level 5s
INSTRUCTIONS
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

SUDOKU 4178

8	7			1				
6	2	5						
	5	3	8					
1	6							
6		5	2				9	
				1	7			
		4	9	3				
			1	7	9			
8		6	5					

SOLUTION SUDOKU 4177

9	2	1	3	6	7	5	4	8
4	8	3	5	1	2	9	6	7
7	5	6	8	9	4	1	3	2
8	9	7	4	2	3	6	5	1
6	4	5	1	8	9	7	2	3
3	1	2	6	7	5	4	8	9
2	3	9	7	4	6	8	1	5
5	6	8	9	3	1	2	7	4
1	7	4	2	5	8	3	9	6

DAY TODAY BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)
At first sight a great deal may seem to be unclear. Switch into classical Arien mode and appreciate that what is very necessary now is an instinctive and intuitive approach. In other words, although the facts and figures may be important, they don't necessarily tell the whole story.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)
It's all happening. The very special features in your solar horoscope at the moment are provided by the links between planets which rule your inner, private life and those which influence your public aspirations. That's why you might actually be expressing your destiny.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)
I'd like to begin the week with a word about health, for the planets are adopting one of those classic formations which tends to make Tureans feel so terribly under-par. It's very important that you pace yourself, putting your feet up as and when necessary.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)
You must be aware by now that life is becoming increasingly strange and a little mysterious. A partner may have some good news late in the day, so stick around and give an old opportunity a new chance. Financial details need further consideration, so don't be rushed.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
Mercury is still in a critical relationship with a series of planets. We astrologers describe this particular pattern as electrifying, so wait for the sparks to fly — if they're not already doing so. The biggest bone of contention could be money, perhaps because you found yourself holding the bill.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)
The entire financial system is in a state of flux. How far this affects you is another matter, but I believe that you are now in a very strong position to effect a long-term reform in your personal affairs. You'll be able to slip between the cracks and work out your own solutions.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)
In a sense you are now being offered one last chance. A last chance to do what, you may ask? The straight answer is a chance to complete whatever was begun two or three months ago and is still of very special personal importance. So, whatever's happened in the meantime, get on with it.

CAPRICORN (Jan 21 - Jan 20)
Splendid planetary aspects are waking you from your slumbers. It's all very reminiscent of rising from a troubled dream to discover just how marvellous life really is. Even the odd trauma over the next month may teach you what a wonderful world we live in.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)
You may safely leave domestic initiatives until the end of the month without risking your reputation. Today's lunar inclinations are nicely sociable, so a fine time may be had if you mix as widely as possible and remember that everyone has a story to tell.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)
A great deal of this week's celestial activity seems to involve the thought processes. I wouldn't say it was a good time for harmonious discussion and agreement, more for outrageous statements and extreme positions. And then there's the question of your secret fantasies. More about them later.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)
Career matters are highlighted today, although whatever happens at work may have strangely emotional overtones. Security seems to be one of the major issues, so don't object if others are a little clingy. After all, you have often relied on them in the past.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)
I know I have warned you about financial indiscretions in the recent past, but I'd like to make the point once again that you're walking a tight rope. There is no room for error and you must be one hundred percent on the ball. A friend, perhaps a female friend, may be able to help.