

DAY 8: BIGGEST SINGLE-DAY JUMP
sees 437 new positive cases across country

INTENSIFY TRACING, SURVEILLANCE,
Health Ministry tells all state governments

AS CASES SPIKE, SHIFT IN STRATEGY:
Home quarantine, monitoring for milder cases

Hurting, States knock on Centre door



People line up outside a PDS outlet in the Behrampur area of Ahmedabad on Wednesday as the Gujarat government began distributing free rations. Javed Raja

Chief Ministers will take up with PM today: Shortage of funds to next steps

PVAIDYANATHAN IYER
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

A WEEK INTO the lockdown, and faced with an extraordinary situation of large-scale migrant worker movement, several states, including Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, and West Bengal, are scrambling to find funds to undertake even basic relief measures for the most vulnerable sections of their people. While most states have written letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking that the Centre clear their pending dues, they are likely to press these demands at a video conference he has scheduled on Thursday. "In the last meeting, while all CMs were present, only eight were invited to speak. This time around, several CMs would want to tell the Prime Minister about the acute economic distress in their respective states," said a senior state government official, who did not wish to be quoted.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



Some state chief ministers have already noted that the announcement of a 21-day lockdown was made without taking them into confidence. With the responsibility of providing relief for migrant workers lying squarely on the shoulders of states, inadequate financial support is only widening the trust deficit with the Centre, some of

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Allow limited resumption or we lose markets to China: Exporters to Govt

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR & HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

SEEKING SOPS to pay wages to workers, export industry representatives have told the government that if it does not find a way soon to re-open manufacturing units under lockdown, Indian products will lose their international markets to China, which has resumed production post the coronavirus outbreak.



Industry representatives met Goyal with demands

During an interaction on Monday with Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush

Goyal, exporters said if India does not begin shipments at this juncture, its export market will be taken over by Chinese products. They cited the example of certain pharmaceuticals exports which have been banned in the wake of the pandemic. They said if they were not allowed to export medicines soon, the global markets would be taken over by China.

"We conveyed that the problem is once you cede the ground to any country, particularly

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WORLD



WORST CRISIS FOR HUMANITY SINCE WORLD WAR 2: UN

US HEADED FOR VERY TOUGH, PAINFUL TWO WEEKS: TRUMP

PAGE 12

TN traces 110 new cases to Tabligh congregation, other states zero in, too

ARUN JANARDHANAN, SREENIVASA JANYALA, ABANTIKA GHOSH & AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
CHENNAI, HYDERABAD, NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

AS STATES and Union territories across the country continued their efforts to trace and quarantine people who attended a Tablighi Jamaat congregation in the capital last month, Tamil Nadu on Wednesday reported 110 new COVID-19 cases, all linked to the gathering. In Andhra Pradesh too, as the

CORONA COUNT
1834 CASES | 41 DEATHS
143 RECOVERED

number of positive cases jumped from 44 to 111 overnight, all the 67 new cases were linked to the Delhi meet attended by almost 4,000 people. According to Tamil Nadu Health Secretary Beela Rajesh, of the total 234 cases in the state,

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Lockdown strains economy, but key to containing virus: Guleria

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

EVEN IF it's causing severe strain in the economy, the national lockdown is a very significant strategy to contain the spread of the coronavirus in India. And a call on how long it should continue — and in what form — can be taken only after a close look at data from different states, said AIIMS Director and member of

the high-level technical committee of Public Health Experts for COVID-19, Dr Randeep Guleria.

In a detailed interview to *The Indian Express* in which he explained a range of issues from testing to India's relatively low numbers, Dr Guleria was asked what his advice would be to the government on the next steps.

"My issue is to start quickly looking at data. There are two or three questions there. One: how long should the lockdown con-

tinue? Two, should it be throughout the country or (should) there be a graded lifting of the lockdown in certain areas? That is dependent on the data that emerges in terms of the number of cases, hotspots, and areas in our country that are safe, are protected because of lockdown, and don't have a significant number of cases. That data is important so that we can take a call on (these questions)," Dr Guleria said.

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Govt considers shift in policy, milder cases may not require hospitalisation

ABANTIKA GHOSH & KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE GOVERNMENT is mulling a change in policy on care of patients of novel coronavirus, limiting hospitalisation to only those who really need it.

So far, all positive patients have been kept in hospital, but as numbers rise, discussions are being held about sending the milder cases to home quarantine

and monitoring them over phone.

Highly placed government sources said this was being discussed as much to rationalise the use of hospital beds as to minimise exposure of healthcare workers, who are most at risk of contracting the disease. India has recommended hydroxychloroquine as post-exposure prophylactic medication (preventive medicine after exposure) for healthcare workers, but has so far not given out a consolidated

list of the number of infections among doctors, nurses etc.

While there are no definite protocols for hospitalisation of a symptomatic patient (fever, cough, and shortness of breath), the guidelines are clear on two aspects: the final decision to admit a patient is the discretion of the treating physician; and till the time laboratory results are received, the suspected patient has to be kept in isolation at a health facility and given

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EXPLAINED
Optimising use of beds, cutting risk

AS THE all but inevitable spike in the infection comes, it will be critical to rationalise the use of hospital beds, so that the limited capacity can be utilised for patients who need it most. Keeping the milder patients at home will also go some distance in lowering the risk for frontline healthcare workers.

Hajela of Assam NRC fame is removed as health chief after power shift in Bhopal

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, APRIL 1

DAYS AFTER returning to power in Bhopal, the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government on Wednesday removed Health Commissioner Prateek Hajela from his post for "showing grave negligence towards his duties" at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Removed by Chouhan for 'negligence of duties'

As NRC coordinator for Assam, Hajela had also earned the ire of the BJP and the party-led government there. An IAS

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Nizamuddin powers Delhi spread, all but 3 of 32 new cases attended gathering

ASTHA SAXENA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

OF THE 32 new COVID-19 cases that were recorded in Delhi on Wednesday, 29 are members of the Tablighi Jamaat. So far, 53 members of the outfit, who were part of a congregation at the Markaz Nizamuddin last month, have tested positive in Delhi. The total number of confirmed cases of the infection in the national

capital rose to 152 on Wednesday.

Nizamuddin West is among the 10 COVID-19 hotspots identified by the Centre across the country.

All through Tuesday and until 4 am on Wednesday, occupants of the Markaz were evacuated in batches. "After a long operation lasting 36 hours, the whole Markaz building was emptied. 2,361 people were

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PAGE 1 ANCHOR

Brooding Taj to fearful kirana, distress and despair loom large

DIPANKAR GHOSE
DAUKI (AGRA), APRIL 1

IT IS noon in Dauki village on the Agra-Fatehabad road, and the shelves inside Ramesh Kumar's kirana store are in different stages of empty. Locally sourced biscuits and namkeen: half-full. Atta and rice: empty. Soap: two bars left, both "Lux Soft Touch". Outside, a voice from a loud-speaker mounted on a police jeep exhorts people to stay inside, and to wash their hands to stop the spread of COVID-19.

"Sabun hoga nahin, toh dhoyenge kaise (Without soap,

TEST REPORTS FROM THE FIELD
TRACKING THE VIRUS, LOCKDOWN

how will they wash their hands?)" asks Kumar.

With the nation entering the second week of the lockdown, the local economy in small towns, far from cities, is on its knees: supply chains have been disrupted, lone-man shops have no home delivery, and the police

barricades are unforgiving. So much so, even goods that are part of the solution, like soap, aren't reaching shops, and homes.

In cities, major e-commerce players have coordinated with local officials to coordinate supplies but even that's rapidly fraying — shortage of labour and trucks stuck on the highway are thinning shelves. Pre-lockdown stocks are running out and replenishment is a challenge.

For Kumar, that means life and livelihood in question. "The goods used to come from Agra, about 22 km away. But now they have stopped, and when I call them, they say they



At the Radhaswami dhaba in Jaghina on the Bharatpur-Mathura border. Gajendra Yadav

don't know when they will come again. So I am selling all the stock that I have left. After that, I will have to down my shutters," says Kumar.

About 100 m to the left, Agarwal Grocery Store is bigger, its shelves less desolate. Outside are small circles in white chalk, for customers to stand roughly a metre apart. "We went to the Dauki police station three days ago, and there was a meeting. They said if there is a problem with goods coming in, we will get passes and we can go to the warehouses in Agra in our own vehicles. So we send our pick-up truck. But not everything is avail-

able, and the stocks in Agra are going down," says the staffer at the counter.

Back at the kirana store, with no pick-up truck, it's a solution that's out of Kumar's reach. "I understand how bad the virus is, and that everyone should stay home. But the police are being very aggressive. What if I go to Agra, and I get past the Dauki barricade safely, but get beaten at the others? What if they damage my motorcycle?" he asks.

Agra city, meanwhile, is brooding in silence, its streets eerily empty. Right up to the iconic East Gate of the Taj Mahal, on a cobbled street of red sand-

stone, are hotels on either side. Every single one was boarded up after the Taj itself was shut to the world on March 15. Since then, there has been an exodus.

The freeze on international arrivals, the domestic rail-road-air lockdown and the raging outbreak in the West — all this strike at the very heart of this city's tourism economy.

Right at the end of the East Gate road, is UP Tourism's Taj Khema Hotel. Its gates are open, but only for three of its staff that remained behind. "We have six rooms. Normally, at this time, they are full. Now the hotel is

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WEB EXCLUSIVE

KERALA HAS THE BEST VIRUS TESTING RATE IN INDIA—BUT IS THAT ENOUGH?

Despite having a clear edge over other states in terms of coronavirus testing rate, doctors and experts in Kerala are asking the government to avoid being complacent at this juncture.

TECHNOLOGY

NEW GST RATES COME INTO EFFECT

Here are new phone prices, even if you can't buy them



VIDEO

INDIA'S BIGGEST MANDI

Tonnes of fruits and vegetables are rotting amid the lockdown



EXPRESS AUDIO

How can the coronavirus pandemic in India end?

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

We detail three possible scenarios through which the outbreak could be contained, how long it could take, and what scientists believe is most likely to happen

Rajnath reviews ministry efforts to fight corona

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

APPRECIATING THE assistance of the armed forces to the civil administration in the fight against COVID-19 — and that of the various Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU) and other defence organisations in the country — Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday asked them to “redouble efforts and work in close coordination with other ministries and organisations of the Central government in this crucial time.”

He lauded the services of the multiple organisations under the ministry's umbrella for their efforts in evacuation of Indians from foreign countries, provision of healthcare in quarantine facilities, and for research and production of medical equipment, including sanitisers, face masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) for healthcare professionals.

Present during the video conference Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat said that separate hospitals have been identified to exclusively deal with coronavirus cases and told Singh that more than 9,000 hospital beds have been made available so far.

He also said that currently, more than 1,000 evacuees are quarantined at facilities in Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Chennai, Manesar, Hindan and Mumbai which are maintained by the defence forces, and their quarantine period will end by April 7.

DRDO has been helping in the manufacture of sanitisers, PPEs and ventilators. Speaking to Singh, the chief of the DRDO, G Satheesh Reddy, said the agency's labs have made and supplied 50,000 litres of sanitisers to various security entities — including Delhi Police — and another lakh litres have been sent across the country so far.

Further, the DRDO has already made 10,000 nanotechnology-powered face masks — designated as N99 — and will soon be able to produce 20,000 of them everyday, Reddy said.

In lockdown. MP BJP leader runs 'membership drive'

MILIND GHATAWI
BHOPAL, APRIL 1

DISREGARDING THE lockdown, Hardeep Dang, among the 22 rebel Congress MLAs who brought down the Kamal Nath government, has begun campaigning even though the schedule for the bypolls that hold the key to the survival of the BJP government in Madhya Pradesh is yet to be announced.

The former legislator from Suvasara in Mandasaur district allegedly ran a membership drive for the BJP, in Shyamgarh on Tuesday, exchanging garlands and walking with supporters.

The Opposition Congress Wednesday demanded that the former lawmaker be booked. “Are lockdown, curfew and social distancing meant only for the poor? People are dying but BJP leaders are running membership drive,” Congress party tweeted.

“Everything is untrue,” Dang said when asked about the charges against him. He claimed that he went to a government hospital to acknowledge the efforts of the staff.

Former CM and senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh tweeted a video of the alleged drive. Dang claimed his supporters wanted to garland him but he refused to accept the same and directed them to felicitate others.

FROM PAGE ONE

Hajela

officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre, he was hounded for not backing Assam and the Centre's petitions in the Supreme Court last year for re-verification of a sample of names included in the draft NRC — the final NRC list was subsequently rejected by Assam. Hajela was transferred to Madhya Pradesh on the directions of the Supreme Court last October.

On Wednesday, after addressing a meeting to review the state's preparedness to meet the COVID-19 threat, Chief Minister Chouhan ordered the removal of Hajela.

Principal Secretary Faiz Ahmed Kidwai was given charge of Health Commissioner in addition to his current responsibilities.

The government did not specify why Hajela was suddenly transferred in the midst of the crisis. “The CM has immediately removed Health Commissioner for showing grave negligence towards his duties,” an official release stated. It quoted the Chief Minister as saying “no negligent officer will be spared.”

Hajela did not return calls for comment. Ever since his transfer to Madhya Pradesh, he had been keeping a low profile.

His transfer coincides with a surge in positive coronavirus cases from Indore. Of the 86 positive cases and six deaths in the state, Indore accounts for 63 cases and three deaths.

Guleria

Asked about the low numbers, he said: “We are lucky that the number of cases has not skyrocketed. But at the same time, I don't think we should sit back. We have to be very aggressive in trying to maintain this by containing the spread in a geographical area rather than allowing it to spread. We need active case finding, and maybe more testing in these areas.”

Dr Guleria said that at the country's premier institution, AIIMS, the team of experts is currently looking at one key strategy to fight COVID-19: containment.

“What we are looking at is: containment, containment, containment. We have to contain in localised areas rather than have a widespread infection across the country. We have to upscale our health facilities. It is a time when the public sector and private sector need to come together. There are areas where the public sector may not have that good facilities in terms of ICU care and ventilatory support. And the private sector might be in a much better position to save lives in terms of ventilatory support. It is important for collating our health resources and working as a team for saving lives,” he said.

On community transmission, Dr Guleria highlighted that “to some extent” community transmission will occur in all pandemics — and that it is “incorrect to say that we will never have community transmission”.

“Even if you are able to prevent community transmission today, at some point in time, you will open up travel — at that time there will be some people who will come with the infection and carry it forward. It is not a question of whether we can forever prevent community transmission,” he said.

“To say that we will never have a community transmission will not be a correct statement. There will be some community transmission. As of now, the aim is that even if there is some degree of community spread, we contain it and localise it to a certain area, and focus our resources in terms of providing good healthcare and not allowing it to spread to other areas.”

Asked about the economic

cost of the lockdown, Dr Guleria said that while India is in an advantageous position given its young demographic, there are red flags.

“...Although we are a young population, many of us have comorbidities. India is the diabetes capital of the world. Our population, which has heart disease, gets it 10 years earlier than those in the West. Therefore, the strategy for having a lockdown is essential so that we are able to contain the widespread infection and have time to improve our health resources. To my mind, the economic cost of having a huge outbreak is much more in terms of both the cost and the mortality than what we will lose during in the lockdown in economic terms. That is why lockdown makes sense, even though it is causing a lot of strain on the country's economy,” he said.

Policy change

symptomatic treatment. As per the guidelines on clinical management of COVID-19 issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, patients with mild symptoms — low-grade fever/cough/sore throat without shortness of breath — “may not” require hospitalisation “unless there is a concern for rapid deterioration”. However, government sources said, these guidelines are “not meant to replace clinical judgment or specialist consultation”.

Asked about a change in hospitalisation protocol, Joint Secretary, Health, Lav Agarwa, had said Monday: “All positive cases are sent to the hospital, none of them is in home quarantine. Even after discharge they are monitored for 14 days.”

The idea now is to extend the model for the post-discharge 14-day monitoring over phone to include patients with mild symptoms who are at home and in isolation.

A government source said, “There are four categories of COVID-19 patients — ones who just need to be watched and be kept in isolation so that they do not infect others; those who need care in a high-dependency unit, maybe need oxygen; a third category who needs ICU care and constant monitoring; and the last group that needs to be on ventilators. Reports suggest 80-85% have mild symptoms and just need symptomatic relief. We are planning to keep such patients at home. They will be monitored over phone daily. If need arises, they will be shifted to the hospital immediately.”

The source underlined that more than a bed-rationalisation effort, the change being considered was about minimising contact of doctors and other hospital staff. “The lone recommendation currently is to avoid exposure. Why should I expose my doctors and healthcare workers for a person who can very well be taken care of at home? In fact, we are also thinking there should be different designated hospitals for the fourth category of patients.”

There are an estimated 1.26 lakh isolation beds earmarked for COVID-19 patients in the country. This includes 17,631 beds in Central government institutions and 1.09 lakh in states. The Railways has been tasked with creating 3.2 lakh isolation and quarantine beds, including in coaches.

The hospitalisation policy so far, though unwritten, is so stringent that a foreign national who had tested positive on arriving in India was issued a limited visa and provided hospital care.

The Health Ministry's clinical management guidelines state that early identification of those with severe symptoms “allows for immediate optimized supportive care treatments and safe, rapid admission (or referral) to the intensive care unit”.

On discharge of coronavirus

States knock on Centre's door

the officials told *The Indian Express*. An official in the Chief Minister's Office of one of the states said the Union Ministry of Home Affairs had last week authorised them to utilise money available under the SDRF (State Disaster Response Fund) for setting up relief measures. “But for many states, the SDRF is just a book entry. Money is fungible. With huge bills pending at the Centre's doorsteps, most states have utilised money parked under different heads,” the official said.

“Maharashtra has recently written a letter to the Government of India, seeking

immediate release of Rs 25,000 crore, which includes Rs 18,000 crore towards GST compensation. Scarcity of funds is affecting relief measures of states, especially since the Centre is woefully inadequate,” said a state official.

Another funding source the Centre had asked states to tap into was the Building and Other Construction Workers welfare cess. Announcing the relief package on March 26, the Union Finance Ministry said the collective corpus under this head available with all states stood at Rs 31,000 crore. State government officials, however,

said this amount was only for registered construction workers, many of whom had left for their hometowns.

Further, the official said, most states have not yet started disbursements of money from the welfare funds. “We are trying to ascertain if those registered are indeed construction workers. In the past, funds have been disbursed ahead of elections by these politician-run welfare boards to their vote banks,” said the official.

A third official who advises the Chief Minister of a northern state said many states are forced to undertake measures

they never did in the past. “For example, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan have deferred or cut salaries. This is denying a contractual obligation to our employees,” said the official.

For many states, revenues from sales tax, excise, have dried up, but expenditures have only ballooned over the last three weeks. Given the pre-existing fiscal stress, states have less money in bank accounts. “Mitigating economic stress will be the biggest issue in tomorrow's meeting,” said the official who advises the Chief Minister on financial aspects.

and West Delhi's Bakkarwala). Medical staff, administration, police, DTC staff put their lives in danger but worked together. I salute them,” Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia tweeted.

The Health Department has traced over 100 people living in areas near Nizamuddin West. They were shortlisted after the department analysed the movement of visitors over the last few days. “This is a precautionary measure to ensure there is no more transmission in the area. We have identified all places close to the Markaz. We are checking if they have developed any symptoms or have been in contact with any of the visitors. Officials in the area are making regular phone calls and visits,” a senior Health officer said.

Of the 29 new cases from the Markaz, 28 are admitted to Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital. On Tuesday night, a 64-year-old from Malaysia who was brought from the Markaz to the hospital died after a cardiac arrest. The man tested negative for the virus, and the hospital is co-ordinating with the Malaysian Embassy on the next course of action.

Several mosques in Old Delhi are also being checked by health officers as a preventive measure, to ensure no foreign nationals or large gatherings are present. “At present, the situation in Delhi seems to be contained. But we need to focus on this case as the numbers are rising across the country,” the officer said.

Brooding Taj

empty but for the three of us. We don't step outside, for fear of the virus. So many foreigners come here. Who knows where we could get infected?” says one of them, who identifies himself as a government safai karamchari posted at the hotel for 24 years.

“I did think about returning to my village, about 60 km away. But I am afraid that when we leave, and things become really bad, people might be forced to do what they can for some money. What if they steal from this place? The government will throw us out,” he says.

“But the situation is so bad, who knows if we will get our salaries. If the phone doesn't beep in the first week of April, I will leave.”

Over 60 km away, in Jaghna on the Bharatpur-Mathura border, the Radhaswami Family Restaurant is the only establishment with the lights on in the darkness. The highway is usually teeming with trucks, and dhabs are aplenty. But now, every single one of them, except this, is shut.

“That is because I have very little farmland, and my only source of income is this dhaba. Now nobody comes, except migrants walking back, mostly looking for water. I don't know how long we can stay open. The supplies, vegetables and paneer, are all rotting,” says Gambhir Singh, the owner.

Sitting on his haunches on a charpai, Singh complains about the inconsistency of the lockdown. “Some days, someone says we can remain open. On other days, the police arrive, abuse us, and ask us to go home,” he says.

Over the last week, Gambhir has watched as weary migrants have crossed by in front of his shop, some meandering in, asking for food. He says he has never refused, but has found a workaround that is giving him some financial respite. “I give them food and tell them to go inside and eat so nobody will see or disturb them. But if someone wants cigarettes, beedi or pan masala, I charge them extra,” he says.

But even this won't last long, he admits. And then, he says, he will switch off the lights.

Allow limited resumption: Exporters

China, it is very, very difficult to get back,” Ajay Sahai, Director General of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations, told *The Indian Express*.

“That's why the demand that let us at least start production with some 50 per cent manpower or even less to enable social distancing and health and sanitation norms, so that the industry is also not hard hit,” he said.

The industry players demanded resumption of “limited movement of people” on the lines of goods movement permitted by the government last week. They said employees involved in essential work such as processing of salaries and payments of bills should be allowed to go to factories.

At the meeting, exporters sought financial sops to pay wages, citing liquidity crunch with businesses being hit by the outbreak. One proposal conveyed was to exempt the industry for the time being from statutory payments like ESI contribution — a percentage of the wages are parked in the scheme meant for social security of workers. Or, removing the cap of Rs 15,000-a-month salary for EPF contributions — the government has announced that it will pay the monthly contribution of both the employee and employer under the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) for workers earning below Rs 15,000 a month in establishments which have up to 100 employees.

Yet another option con-

veyed was a straight-up package in which a certain percentage of the wage bill will be borne by the government.

“At a point, there will be a position that nobody can be paid,” said Shyamal Ghosh, Chairman of the Telecom Equipment and Services Export Promotion Council. The Council Co-Chairman attended the meeting but Ghosh told *The Indian Express* what was conveyed to the government. “If your inflow doesn't come in by meeting the order, there will be a problem. And in this economic situation, unless easy money comes in, it becomes difficult to meet the wage bill also.”

Those who attended the meeting said the government

side did not offer any commitment but took down the demands and suggestions. “The Minister was very keen that Indian industry gets back to being normal as soon as possible,” Sahai said.

Many asked the government to clear old dues — telecom equipment manufacturers said around Rs 2,000 crore is due to them from PSUs like BSNL and MTNL.

“Telecom is an essential service and the line of production has to be maintained. Unless production is maintained, you can't engage the full labour force. And for maintaining production, first the dues have to be cleared and second, easy working capital should be there,” Ghosh said.

patients from hospital, the guidelines state. “Discharge after chest radiograph has cleared and two specimens turn negative within 24 hours.” However, the treating physician still holds the right to take a call. For symptomatic patients whose sample test results are negative, discharge is “governed by provisional/confirmed diagnosis” by a treating physician, and the patient has to be monitored for 14 days from their last contact with a confirmed case.

Sources in government hospitals currently managing COVID-19 patients say “the general guidance” regarding whom to admit is based on the patient's respiratory rate, blood pressure, blood oxygen saturation level, age, cardio-vascular risk including hypertension, chronic lung/liver/kidney disease, diabetes and other immune-compromised states. A decision on ICU admission is taken based on the need for mechanical ventilation, if a patient's mental status is worsening, and if a patient is experiencing multi-organ dysfunction syndrome.

In the US, currently the worst-hit country in the world, 21%-31% of COVID-19 patients between February 12 and March 16 were hospitalised, with 5%-12% admitted to ICU, as per a report by the Centers for Disease and Control. Some US hospitals have even started ‘Do Not Resuscitate’ policies for coronavirus patients.

In Italy, at the peak of the outbreak in places like the badly-hit Bergamo, only the very gravely ill were being admitted in hospitals.

Tabligh

190 are now directly or indirectly linked to the Tablighi Jamaat gathering.

Similarly, 99 of the 111 cases reported in Andhra Pradesh so far are either those who attended the congregation at Markaz Nizamuddin or their contacts.

Earlier in the day, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in its first statement on the issue, said 154 COVID-19 cases across the country had been traced to the Delhi meet.

Addressing the daily briefing, Lav Agarwa, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, said: “The primary reason for the jump in the number of cases is the fact that members of the Tablighi Jamaat roamed the country. There have been 23 cases from Jammu and Kashmir, 20 from Telangana, 17 from Andhra Pradesh, 9 from Andaman and Nicobar, 65 from Tamil Nadu, 18 from Delhi and 2 from Puducherry.”

With 437 new cases on Wednesday — the highest single-day jump so far — the total number of cases detected across the country has touched 1,834 (143 recovered, 41 died).

In Chennai, the state health secretary said that following the government's appeal, asking those who attended the Delhi congregation to self-report, many people turned up at hospitals.

Of the 110 new cases in Tamil Nadu, 28 are from Coimbatore, 20 from Theni and 17 from Dindigul. There are two foreign nationals — one from Myanmar and another from Indonesia.

In Andhra Pradesh, the new cases were reported from Guntur (20), Kadapa (15), Krishna (15), Prakasam (15), West Godavari (14), Visakhapatnam (11), East Godavari (9), Chittoor (6), Nellore (3), Anantapur (2), Kurnool (1).

“All the new cases in the state are linked to those who participated in the Tablighi Jamaat meeting. Officials are gathering information from the event organisers, police, Railways etc,” said State Minister Botsa Satyanarayana.

“Some of the infected are family members or close contacts of the individuals who attended the meeting,” said an of-

icial. About 700 people from Andhra Pradesh are estimated to have attended the gathering. While Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has appealed to people to self-report, not many have come forward. Officials are still trying to trace over 80 who attended the meet.

In Telangana, all seven deaths in the state so far have been linked to the Delhi congregation. While 12 new cases were reported on Wednesday, taking the state's total to 88, there is no official word on how many are linked to the meet.

Agarwal said the states have been told to intensify the contact tracing and surveillance drive, and more people who attended the congregation, as well as their contacts, are being tested.

“People are being shifted to isolation facilities and hospitals. In Delhi, there are 1,800 people in nine hospitals and quarantine facilities. I would like to emphasise that this is not a national trend. But any failure anywhere to follow the lockdown instructions is bound to lead to an increase in cases. Congregations should be avoided and social distancing norms should be followed 100 per cent,” he said.

Meanwhile, officials of the Northern Railways alleged “misbehaviour” by a group of 167 people linked to the Tablighi Jamaat meet, who have been quarantined at the Railway Loco Pilot training institute and a Railway Protection Force (RPF) barrack in the Capital.

“Occupants were unruly since morning and made unreasonable demand for food items. They misbehaved and abused staff at quarantine centre. Also they started spitting all over & on persons working/attending to them including doctors. They also started roaming around the hostel building,” said Deepak Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, Northern Railway.

He said after they “apprised”

CM SAYS 25,000 NUMBERS SHARED

Police to track phones of those under home quarantine

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE DELHI government has shared thousands of phone numbers of those under home quarantine with the police for tracking their movement, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Wednesday, describing it as a step to check violations.

The decision was taken in a meeting also attended by Lt Governor Anil Bajjal, Chief Secretary Vijay Kumar Dev and Delhi Police Commissioner S N Shrivastava. On Tuesday, 11,084 numbers were shared, while on Wednesday, 14,345 numbers will be shared with the police,

the CM said.

Kejriwal said Singapore and South Korea are among the countries to have taken the tech route to check violations. "We have decided that by taking assistance of police we will track the phones of people who were ordered to be home quarantined. As many as 11,084 such numbers were shared with the police yesterday. And today 14,345 phone numbers will be handed over," said Kejriwal, addressing the daily press briefing.

In its statement, the Lt Governor's Secretariat said that "technology should be used for contact tracing and checking compliance of home quarantine cases", without elaborating fur-

ther. Both the CM and L-G Bajjal had previously warned that FIRs would be lodged against those violating home quarantine norms.

Bajjal had said that FIRs should be lodged against such violators under Section 188 of IPC as prescribed under Regulation 18 of the Delhi Epidemic Diseases, COVID-19 Regulations, 2020. The Delhi government had also started putting hand stamps for easy identification of quarantined individuals.

The national capital had 120 coronavirus cases as on Wednesday morning, Kejriwal said. A total of 768 people are currently admitted in Delhi government hospitals.

Rs 1 CR TO KIN OF DOCTORS WHO SUCCUMB TO COVID-19

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Wednesday announced that families of doctors, medical staff and safai karamcharis who succumb to COVID-19 while serving the community will receive a compensation of Rs 1 crore.

"Your contribution is invaluable and cannot be equated to a sum of money, but this is a token of support. A life lost cannot be offset monetarily but this is an attempt," said the CM in a



Kejriwal addresses doctors, Wednesday

video conference with doctors from government hospitals across the city.

Kejriwal emphasised on the plight of doctors and medical staff during the outbreak and appreciated their efforts. He added that some doctors have been put up at a five-star hotel.

He reiterated that the government will cover the costs of all doctors and medical staff undergoing treatment in case they are diagnosed with coronavirus. **ENS**

Out of the total positive cases, one patient is on ventilator, two on oxygen support while the rest are recovering. The government has evacuated 2,346 people from the Markaz Nizamuddin Building, the headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat, out of which 536 have been sent to hospitals and 1,810 to isolation centres, Kejriwal said.

"Corona appears to be under control in Delhi. There has been no community transmission. Out of the confirmed cases, 49 had come from abroad, 24 were in the Markaz building while 29 people contracted the virus from those who returned from foreign countries, which are cases of local transmissions," he added.

The CM also appealed to the

Centre to make available more PPE and testing kits. In terms of addressing the needs of families in economic distress, Kejriwal said PDS allocation will be made even to those not having ration cards if they file applications. "You may not get the card immediately but apply and you will be eligible for ration," he said, adding that the one-time assistance amount of Rs 5,000 has been extended to around 35,000 construction workers so far.

"The Commissioner of Police informed that as per the instructions, DTC buses have been deployed in all police stations for transporting stranded people to shelters homes," the L-G House statement added.

Seven from Nizamuddin mosque named in FIR for March gathering



A police surveillance drone being operated from over South Delhi's Nizamuddin area, Wednesday. Praveen Khanna

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

AN FIR filed by the SHO of Nizamuddin police station has named seven people associated with the management committee of the Alami Markaz Banglawali Masjid, headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat outfit, for allegedly going ahead with a gathering of around 2,000 people at the mosque in Nizamuddin West despite warnings from agencies. The event has been linked to a spike in COVID-19 cases across the country.

The Delhi Police Crime Branch Wednesday also issued notices to agencies which had "informed the (mosque's) management about enforcement of Section 144 in the city" at the time of the gathering.

Special Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Praveer Ranjan told *The Indian Express* that they have registered an FIR naming seven people, including



Sanitisation work underway at the Markaz Nizamuddin building, Wednesday. The government has evacuated 2,361 people from the building. Praveen Khanna

maulana Saad Kandhalvi. "We have found an audio clip going viral on social media, and are now sending it to forensic experts. We are gathering evidence to substantiate that they went ahead with the event despite warnings by several agencies," he said.

In the purported clip, a man can be heard saying "there is no

need for social distancing as it is not written about in our religion".

Apart from Kandhalvi, others names mentioned in the FIR are management committee members. "Police are also checking their bank accounts," said an officer.

In his complaint, SHO Mukesh Walia alleged, "We told them sev-

eral times and also called them to our police station, where we again informed them about the directions. They were advised to vacate the Markaz headquarters, but they did nothing."

Advocate Shahid Ali, who represents the Tablighi Jamaat, said, "We have not received a copy of the FIR, nor have we been approached by the Delhi Police. Maulana saab is not absconding, he is at home. We are ready to join the investigation. We approached the SHO of Hazrat Nizamuddin police station for a copy of the FIR and were told to ask the Crime Branch. We have no idea about its contents."

On Tuesday, DCP (Southeast) R P Meena had said: "There are essentially two buildings — one is a mosque and the other a markaz (centre) — with five-six floors. Around 1,500-2,000 people live here. The last time a jamaat was held here was on March 20-21. Since the lockdown was implemented, we have sent two notices to them about enforcement of Section 144."

Shortage of sanitary pads hits many areas

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

AS DELHI enters week two of the lockdown, several medical and general stores are running low on female hygiene products, such as sanitary pads, as well as diapers due to issues in production and transportation. Shopkeepers complained that stocks are limited as units that produce pads and diapers were shut. Several stores have also contacted wholesalers to replenish stock.

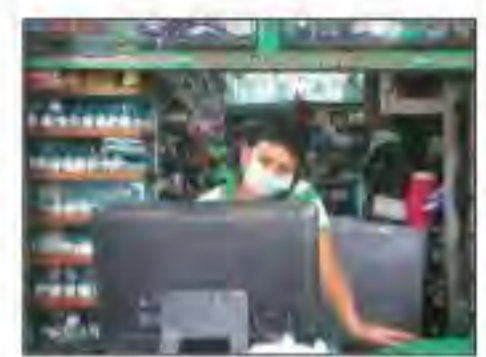
Last week, the central government issued guidelines and listed "essential" items that were to be exempted from the lockdown. Items like sanitary pads, tissue paper, diapers and soap weren't on the list. This led to immediate closure of units that make these products, and suspension of transport of these goods. Though the Centre revised the order on March 29, adding these products to the "essential" list, supply continues to run low.

The order, signed by Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, states, "I would like to clarify that with the issue of first addendum, transportation of all goods, without distinction of essential and non-essential, have been allowed." The list includes hand wash, soap, disinfectant, body wash, shampoo, sanitary pads, diapers etc.

A few shopkeepers said they have completely run out of stock. Rajkumar, owner of Sharma Medical store in Uday Park, said wholesalers have not given him pads and diapers for over 12 days.

"We don't know what to do... customers need these products. To save stock, I instructed my employees to not give more than one pack to a customer. But I have run out of pads. I was told that officials are now letting these units run but their transport is still not permitted. They should fix this issue because everyone is blaming us."

In Outer Delhi, shops said they have now contacted other wholesalers. In Noida, medical stores have run out of stock, causing panic among residents.



Closure of units producing the products caused stores to run out of supplies

Outcry over lack of protective gear as 7 doctors test positive

ASTHA SAXENA & ABHINAV RAJPUT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

AMID THE coronavirus epidemic, seven doctors working in different hospitals and clinics in the capital have tested positive for the disease so far. In the list are two resident doctors at Safdarjung hospital, one each in Delhi State Cancer Institute (DSCI) and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Chest hospital (SVBPCH), two mohalla clinic doctors and a doctor working in a private clinic.

Resident doctors across the city have already raised concerns over the lack of personal protection equipment (PPE) and proper protocol to be followed while dealing with COVID-19 patients in several government hospitals in Delhi.

In North MCD-ruled Hindu Rao hospital, many healthcare workers offered to resign citing lack of PPEs as a reason. According to senior doctors, the hospital received 10-12 resignations over the last few days. "Additionally, several doctors said they don't want to get their contracts renewed," said a senior doctor.

The hospital, however, issued a circular Wednesday saying that none of the resignations will be accepted by the administration during the outbreak. "Their resignations will not be accepted and their names will be sent to the DMC Office Nursing Council of India to take disciplinary action against them," read the order.

However, North MCD Commissioner Varsha Joshi tweeted, "This order was issued against directions of DHA (Director, Hospital Administration) and without the knowledge of Additional Commissioner and Commissioner. Disciplinary action will be taken for this disobedience."

CORONA COUNT DELHI NCR

224 CASES **3** DEATHS

35 RECOVERED

From my side, any unwilling worker is more than welcome to resign. Especially in a pandemic."

Meanwhile, a 32-year-old doctor working in the department of pediatrics in Delhi government's Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel hospital tested positive for COVID-19 Tuesday, days after his wife, a resident doctor in the department of biochemistry, tested positive. The couple, residents of South Delhi, had travelled to the UK in the first week of March.

On Tuesday night, a 34-year-old resident doctor working in the department of preventive oncology at DSCI tested positive for COVID-19. The doctor had last visited the hospital on March 21. On Wednesday, the hospital shut down its OPD for sanitisation. "We are preparing a list of all the contacts, doctors, nurses and other hospital staff who might have come in contact with the doctor. His brother and sister-in-law had come from Europe last month and we are trying to establish the links. He has been shifted to Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar hospital for treatment. His family members have been admitted to Lok Nayak hospital," said Dr BL Shervhal, director of the DSCI.

At Safdarjung hospital, a 26-year-old doctor from the department of pulmonary medicine tested positive for the disease. The administration has quarantined 21 healthcare workers — including doctors, nurses and other paramedical staff — who came in contact with the doctor.

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, DEHRADUN
Government of India, Ministry of Finance, (Department of Financial Services)
2nd Floor, Paras Tower, Mazra, Saharanpur Road, Dehradun, UK, 248171

PUBLICATION NOTICE IN O.A. No. 386 OF 2019

SUMMONS UNDER SUB-SECTION (4) OF SECTION 14 OF THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS AND BANKRUPTCY ACT, 1993. READ WITH SUB-RULE (2A) OF RULE 5 OF THE DEBT RECOVERY TRIBUNAL (PROCEDURE) RULES, 1993 AS AMENDED. FROM TIME TO TIME

Dy. No. 198 Date: 16-03-2020

To, Punjab National Bank V/s M/s Taj Hotel & Ors.

- Mis Taj Hotel a sole Proprietorship firm having its registered Office at GT Road, Deoband, Distt Saharanpur, UP. Through its sole proprietor Arif, S/o Margoob Ahmad Siddiqui.
- Arif Siddiqui, S/o Margoob Ahmad Siddiqui, R/o 116, Mohalla Abul Mali, Deoband, Distt Saharanpur, UP.
- Khurshed Ahmad Siddiqui, S/o Margoob Ahmad Siddiqui, R/o 116, Mohalla Abul Mali, Deoband, Distt Saharanpur, UP.
- Mansoor Ahmad, S/o Qazi Magssoob Ahmad, R/o 116, Mohalla Abul Mali, Deoband, Distt Saharanpur, UP. "Since Deceased"
- Imrana, W/o Late Mansoor Ahmad, R/o 116, Mohalla Abul Mali, Deoband, Distt Saharanpur, UP.
- Yusuf Siddiqui, S/o Late Mansoor Ahmad, R/o 116, Mohalla Abul Mali, Deoband, Distt Saharanpur, UP.
- Yusuf Hassan, S/o Late Mansoor Ahmad, R/o 116, Mohalla Abul Mali, Deoband, Distt Saharanpur, UP.
- Nagma, D/o Late Mansoor Ahmad, R/o 116, Mohalla Abul Mali, Deoband, Distt Saharanpur, UP.
- Saima, D/o Late Mansoor Ahmad, R/o 116, Mohalla Abul Mali, Deoband, Distt Saharanpur, UP.
- Khatija, D/o Late Mansoor Ahmad, R/o 116, Mohalla Abul Mali, Deoband, Distt Saharanpur, UP.
- Ayesha, D/o Late Mansoor Ahmad, R/o 116, Mohalla Abul Mali, Deoband, Distt Saharanpur, UP.

Whereas the above named Applicant Bank has instituted O.A No. 386 of 2019 against you for recovery of debts of Rs. 1,05,31,484.23 in which Hon'ble Tribunal was pleased to issue Summons/Notice U/s 19(4) of the Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act, 1993 and was listed before the Hon'ble Presiding Officer on 11-03-2020.

Whereas, it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by way of this publication directing you to appear in person or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner before the Tribunal on 29-04-2020 at 10.30 A.M.

Take notice that in case of default of your appearance on the specified day and time before the Tribunal, the case shall be heard and decided in your absence.

Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal on this 16th day of March, 2020.

By order of Tribunal Registrar
Debts Recovery Tribunal, Dehradun

OFFICE OF PRINCIPAL, GOVT. DOON MEDICAL COLLEGE
Patel Nagar Dehradun-248001 Uttarakhand Tel: 0135-2726020-2726021
Email : doonmedicalcollege@gmail.com

Ref. No.: GDMC/Advt./2020/1420 Dated: 01.04.2020

WALK IN INTERVIEW FOR SENIOR RESIDENT RECRUITMENT IN GOVT. DOON MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL, DEHRADUN, UTTARAKHAND

A walk-in interview for Senior Resident will be held in the office of Principal, Government Doon Medical College, Patel Nagar, Dehradun on every working day w.e.f. 03rd April, 2020 from 11:00 AM to 02:00 PM till all the vacancies would be filled.

Vacancies in various departments are as follows:

Senior Residents : (31) (Medicine-06, TB & Chest-02, Obs. & Gyn.-02, Radiodiagnosis-03, Paediatrics -01, Psychiatry-01, Anaesthesia-04, Surgery-04, Orthopedics-03, Radiotherapy-02, PMR-1, Ophthalmology-01, Dermatology-01)

Salary: Senior Resident Rs. 84,000/- PM, **Qualification :-** As per MCI norms.

Reservation :- As per Rule of Uttarakhand Govt.

Note :- Number of posts advertised may be increased or decreased as per requirement.

Principal,
Govt. Doon Medical College, Dehradun

44 bus drivers booked for ferrying migrants

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

DELHI POLICE has booked 44 DTC and cluster bus drivers for allegedly ferrying migrant workers to Anand Vihar ISBT amid the nationwide lockdown. An FIR has been registered at Shakarpur police station in East Delhi based on the complaint of a policeman. "This act on the part of bus drivers/conductors and operations heads of DIMTS (Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System Ltd) and other government servants (amounts to) an offence under Sections 269, 270, 271 and 188 of IPC and Section 55 of Disaster



At Anand Vihar on Saturday

Management Act," reads the FIR. When contacted, a Delhi government spokesperson said: "We did not issue any order to take anyone to the border. The FIRs are

wrong. Migrant exodus is taking place all over the country. Why is only Delhi being targeted? This is not the time to do politics." The Centre had Sunday suspended two senior bureaucrats of the Delhi government and initiated disciplinary proceedings against two others for alleged dereliction of duty during the lockdown.

After the lockdown was announced, thousands of migrant workers have been trying to walk back to their villages. The numbers had swelled on Saturday, when thousands gathered at Anand Vihar and Lal Kuan in the hope of getting a bus to UP. The UP government had claimed Delhi government deliber-

ately dropped migrant labourers at the border with UP — a charge denied by Deputy CM Manish Sisodia.

The complainant, Mukesh, was on picket duty at ITO Sunday when he claims to have seen 44 DTC and cluster buses ferrying migrant workers. He alleged in the complaint: "When enquired, the passengers said they were going to Anand Vihar ISBT from where they will board buses to their native places in UP and Bihar... the buses were sent back to the places from where they started." Mukesh alleged: "When drivers buses were asked why they were carrying passengers without issuing tickets, they replied, 'there are orders from above'"

DELHI GOVT RELEASES Rs 16.18 CRORE IN ASSISTANCE

2015 to 2020: Registered construction workers fell from over 3 lakh to 40,000

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE DISBURSAL of the Delhi government's one-time assistance amount of Rs 5,000 each to construction labourers in the city to help them tide over the coronavirus lockdown period faces obstacles, with thousands of workers falling off the grid of the city's welfare board in recent years.

Records available with *The Indian Express* show that between 2015 and 2020, the number of registered workers came down from over 3 lakh to less than 40,000. Labour Minister Gopal Rai said the numbers have come down but the government was working on making the system more transparent.

On Wednesday, the Delhi government said it has released the assistance amount to 32,358 registered workers. "The money is being transferred directly to the account of these labourers. A total amount of Rs 16.18 crore has been given to registered construction workers of Delhi. The government will soon give the assistance amount to nearly 9,000 workers as well to those whose applications are pending. A total amount of Rs 4.5 crore will be disbursed. Moreover, pension of 200 construction workers has also been released up to March 31," it said.

However, in many cases, construction labourers are not registered with the Delhi Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board, which handles the corpus. Plus, the labour department had made the registration process more extensive last year, under which every applicant is expected to fill up a 12-page form. Officially, 37,127 construction labourers are registered with the board currently, while 9,149 applications are under process — a far cry from the lakhs working in the capital. Past records indicate thousands of workers disappeared from the registered list since 2015.

In 2015, the board had 3.17 lakh registered workers; the number fell to 62,663 in 2017-18; and further over the next three years. While many workers routinely fall off the grid of the safety net due to their inability to stick to the compulsory annual renewal, mandated under the Building and Other Construction Workers Act, 1996, the numbers in Delhi appear to have dipped between 2016-2020 due to a "verification drive".

"Construction workers keep coming and going and the law demands annual renewals. Due to that, many drop out of the system. On top of that, we got a few complaints on fake registrations and those are being verified and probed. So, we are moving the entire system online, instead of the current over-the-counter registration process."

Noida: 9 'linked' to firm test positive

AMIL BHATNAGAR
NOIDA, APRIL 1

NINE NEW COVID-19 cases were reported in Gautam Budh Nagar in the last 24 hours. While three cases came to light on Tuesday evening, six more samples came back positive Wednesday. Officials suspect the new cases are linked to the Noida fire safety firm which was sealed Tuesday.

Till Wednesday evening, Noida had the maximum number of cases in the district at 48. "There has been an increase of nine cases, as per the latest reports. We are in the process of examining the trail of infection and we suspect that the cases are also linked with the (Noida fire safety) firm, whose 16 employees tested positive. In the last few days, the relatives of those employees have also been infected. Six people have also recovered and been discharged. The district department is taking every measure," said Dr Anurag Bhargava, CMO Gautam Budh Nagar.



40-odd men and women live at the construction site in South Delhi's CR Park. Express

tration process. Workers will be assisted by unions and others in filling up the applications," Rai told *The Indian Express*.

The Act stipulates that 1% of any public or private construction project costing over Rs 10 lakh has to be set aside as cess. "Under the drive, registered workers were asked by Labour Department to submit forms. They were told an online database will be created. On submitting, every worker was given a receiving slip. Last year, the application form was changed. A simple four-page form became 12 pages long. Many registered workers vanished from the list, leaving about 37,000," an official said.

Delhi's welfare board secretary Philip said he was not in a position to comment, while Labour Commissioner Manoj Kumar said he does not have details as he joined the department recently.

Records also show that in March 2015, soon after AAP came to power, the annual renewal process was revised, allowing registered workers to go for renewal every three years. However, the order was reversed in August, and the one-year rule was restored through a circular signed by then Deputy Labour Commissioner Jitender Kumar.

A look at the 12-page form shows that applicants are expected to share personal details, including Aadhaar numbers, details and Aadhaar numbers of their family members; present and permanent address proof; address of last workplace where the applicant worked over 90 days; name and contact details of

contractor; details of registered union of which the applicant is a member; colour photos of self and family members; details of bank account, among others.

"The previous form was only four pages and much easier for workers. Even then, many would find themselves out of the safety net for showing up for renewal a day or two late, but the system is in mess now," said Rajesh Kumar, general secretary of the Indian Federation of Trade Unions.

As per data shared by the government in the Delhi Assembly in 2018, the board was formed in Delhi in 2002 and has since amassed over Rs 2,000 crore as cess collected under the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Act, 1996. Under the law, a registered worker can get assistance of up to Rs 10,000 on being hospitalised for five or more days. A building worker aged above 60 is entitled to pension of Rs 3,000 a month. The disability pension is also Rs 3,000 a month.

Workers are also entitled to get educational and maternity assistance and loans for purchase of work-related tools. In 2017-18, only Rs 2,000 was granted for purchase of tools, with many failing to avail its benefit as the amount is given to a worker on a reimbursement basis upon the production of purchase receipts.

In 2018, the board was providing pension benefits to only 146 workers, while the number of workers getting disability pension stood at two.

The Supreme Court has in the past questioned states over the unspent money.

At CR Park, those building a govt school are case study

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE BUNGALOWS and high-rises around them have people staying indoors, adhering to the 'work from home' stricture. But the lived reality of migrant workers constructing a Delhi government school in South Delhi's CR Park is far different.

"I have been in this line for the last nine years. For all these years, construction sites have been home for me. This is where we work and live," said Avinash Yadav, a 22-year-old from Chhattisgarh's Raigarh district.

Yadav's words found an echo in the voices of 40-odd men and women living at the site, in a makeshift slum of low-ceiling huts made of battered tin — seen across construction sites in India, where the line between home and work are blurred.

And with the lockdown shutting down such construction sites, workers are not only staring at uncertainty over income, they also run the risk of losing the roof over their heads.

"The contractor told us there will be no work for the next three months. And that we are free to leave for our villages. But how do we go?" Kanti Lal, whose wife also works here, said. Their two children stay with them.

The workers were being paid around Rs 450 per working day, which does not add up to the minimum wage of Rs 14,842 per month as fixed by the Delhi government. And due to the roving nature of the work, they are not registered with the construction workers' welfare boards, a prerequisite to get the one-time assistance amount of Rs 5,000 announced by the Centre and states.

"I was in Faridabad before shifting here," Avinash said, while his friend Ravindra Kumar was working at a site in Badarpur. The workers spend an average of three to six months at one project, before being taken to another site, mostly by sub-contractors known as "petty contractors" in their parlance.

At the CR Park site, there are 12 families, mostly from Chhattisgarh and Bihar and some from West Bengal districts such as Cooch Behar and Malda. The sub-contractor claimed the workers will be paid for the days they worked in March, beyond which no payment will be made.

On Wednesday, officials of the Delhi government provided ration to the families, after being told that they were fast running out of food. "I have been here for three months with my wife, two sons and daughters-in-law. One daughter-in-law is seven months'

pregnant. We have some money from the last payment made during Holi," said Badri Prasad, from Chhattisgarh's Baloda Bazar-Bhatapara district.

The workers have heard about coronavirus, but they have not been provided with masks, gloves or sanitisers, in the absence of which they are depending on soap and water from one borewell, which serves all the families.

While some like Avinash want to return to Chhattisgarh, most are inclined to stay put, saying that going back would mean toiling as landless labourers. Only Ravindra's family owns one acre of land, which will be divided among three brothers.

Moreover, there are those like Ratan Lal who have taken advance payments from contractors, which is being deducted from his monthly wages. His wife Savitri Mahan requested the Delhi government to step in to assist them so they are not left in dire straits.

There are also labourers such as Azidul Miyan and Iman Ali from West Bengal, who spent barely a week at the site before work came to a halt. "I was working in Govindpuri until six months ago when I went to my village. And the moment I return, work stops. What do I do now?" Azidul asked.

I had informed the Punjab Chief Minister on March 30 about the same through a tweet," said Sirsa. He said he also informed other officials of the state thereafter.

In his tweet, Sirsa had posted photos of scores of people in the gurdwara and asked Punjab CM Captain Amarinder Singh to provide transport to take them back home.

Gurdwara priest Baljinder Singh also said the migrants from Punjab had been staying here and were being fed *langar* for the last 2-3 days. "Police told us they cannot be allowed to stay in the gurdwara like this. Two buses were already sent to Punjab but more people kept coming. Today morning, they were finally evacuated by the SDM and police," he said.

Sirsa, who has been critical of the Tablighi Jamaat gathering and of the Delhi government over the issue, said the two incidents could not be compared. "This was not a religious gathering. Most of these migrants are Hindus, around 40 of them are Christians and about 60 are Sikhs. We had to give them shelter since they had no place to go. You cannot just kick people out," he said.



Several migrants left for their homes over the past week. Praveen Khanna

Hunger a constant companion for those left without work or income

SEEMA CHISHTI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

WHAT TOOK the lakhs of migrants back 'home' in the past few days was the urgency for food, mainly, the surety of the next meal. But there are those who have either been left behind or stayed back in the city, without any work, income or savings. The grimmest question that faces them is the availability of the next meal, which is often assured courtesy a government centre, good Samaritans, charity groups or NGOs.

Ramu (23) came to Delhi from Etah in UP a few months ago and works at a *halwai's* shop "near Shahbad Dairy". As he eats the *kichri* and *rotis* with pickle handed to him by an Aman Biradari team, Ramu says he specialises in cooking "*rasgullas* and *bhaturas*" but all that seems distant now, with his Rs 400 a day having disappeared, as nothing is open now.

Of the lakhs of migrants who through the metropolises, "500,000-600,000", as per the central government's affidavit to the Supreme Court Tuesday, have walked back to their villages in a rushed and haphazard exodus.

Just outside the Kashmir Gate railway station, it is now about those who did not leave. With no home in the city to call their own, they surge on sight-seeing charity food vans.

There are still those outside the government community centres, with the Delhi government saying it will set up 4,700 centres and feed "10-12 lakh more" daily. The government said it is feeding "4 lakh" persons every day already.

Puja Devi (50) is a single woman who lives on the road now. Her late husband in Patna was run over by a vehicle, so she now relies on alms outside a temple in Ghaziabad. Raj Bahadur from Nepal runs a *thela* (handcart), but as there is no business now, he sleeps rough on the street. Neeraj, a rickshaw-puller, makes only two trips to the *sabzi-mandi* at Darya Ganj in the morning. The offer of free meals is something he cannot afford to miss.

Hunger is a problem hard to correctly estimate, say food economists, and coupled with disease, the consequences are of another order. Former Health Secretary, Keshav Desiraju, says, "Consider tuberculosis, it flourishes amongst the hungry. We statistically found those who are hungry to have TB, the most terrifying statistic we are battling, and then with coronavirus, hunger would make them even more vulnerable. It is the government's, corporation's and the city municipality's job to feed the hungry, as with migrants going away, there is not only a displacement of lives and the economy, there is a violation of the lockdown and now, with hunger, greater vulnerabilities of Indians to this disease and any other disease that happens to lurk."

Most economists think hunger cannot be overemphasised enough. Out of 117 countries in 2019, the Global Hunger Index (GHI) found India to be at 102, a status considered "serious". Siraj Hussain, former Union Secretary, Agriculture and Food Processing, says: "The GHI score is based on four parameters — undernourishment; child wasting, the share of children under the age of five who are wasted (low weight for height); child stunting (children under five who have low height for age) and child mortality under five. Under the National Food



Scenes from the capital of those who stayed back. Many of them now depend on the govt or NGOs for food

Security Act, priority households get 5 kg food grains per person per month. This is only about half the monthly requirement. Amid the lockdown due to the crisis caused by coronavirus, workers in the unorganised sector need to be provided cooked food."

Reetika Khera at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT-Delhi has done estimates which establish that "Hunger is a serious problem in Bihar-Jharkhand, UP, and possibly even in pockets of Odisha and Chhattisgarh, and tribal belt of Rajasthan and MP".

These are the states which have the maximum number of those with out-migration too, to the metros. According to a survey in six of the most vulnerable states in 2011, "at least 22% of the respondents remember missing a meal in the past three months".

States like Kerala, Odisha, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu were first off the block to offer cooked food for the impoverished to enable a better battling of the health emergency. But, says economist Himanshu, "There is a direct link between hunger and diseases. The problem of hunger and malnutrition gets compounded at the time of COVID-19 as the virus hits the elderly and the immunocompromised. What hunger and especially malnutrition does is beat down immunity. So the profile of those affected by COVID-19 may take a different journey here."

Says Biraj Patnaik, former Principal Adviser to the Commissioners of the Supreme Court, responsible for monitoring the food and employment schemes in the right to food case: "Between 2001 and 2017, the Supreme Court had passed multiple orders to prevent hunger and starvation deaths in the landmark right to food case. It would be instructive for governments, both Central and State, to revisit those orders which effectively brought to a halt the starvation deaths. For India's vulnerable under lockdown, the support they have received from the central government (and many states) so far, to paraphrase Krushchev, is in the nature of the support that a rope gives to a hanged man. Unlike governments across the world, state policy in India has shifted the onus of dealing with the pandemic on the citizens rather than thinking through and planning for the vulnerabilities our poorest citizens would face, before announcing the lockdown."

COVID-19 and the suddenness of the lockdown has revealed India's economic and social underbelly in ways which may be a crisis, but also an opportunity, if sought to be faced up to and addressed.

Stranded since lockdown, over 200 people are finally evacuated from Majnu ka Tila gurdwara

ARANYA SHANKAR
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

OVER 200 people were Wednesday evacuated from a gurdwara in Majnu ka Tila area, where they claim to have been stranded since after the lockdown. They have now been quarantined in a school in Nehru Vihar.

An FIR under IPC sections 188 (disobedience), 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) has been registered against the Majnu Ka Tila gurdwara management.

A senior officer said, "Migrant labourers who were going to Punjab from Delhi in the middle of the lockdown were asked not to do so by police... They went and stayed at the gurdwara. Police detected this on Tuesday and on Wednesday, 225 people were evacuated."

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said the sub-divisional magistrate has visited the area and is preparing a report. "Prima facie, it seems like people



A DTC bus ferried workers from the gurdwara, Wednesday. Tashi Tobgyal

inside the gurdwara were migrant workers who sought food and shelter. The gurdwara management contacted the SDM and sought help. The SDM will file a detailed report," he said.

The development comes close to the heels of more than 1,500 people of the Tablighi Jamaat being shifted out of their headquarters in Nizamuddin by authorities in the past few days.

While more than 50 of them have tested positive for COVID-19, over 400 have shown symptoms. The nearly 4,000 strong gathering in the middle of March has now led to authorities in nearly 20 states and Union Territories trying to trace and test those who attended it.

According to Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) president

Manjinder Singh Sirsa, these migrants came to the gurdwara on March 29.

"These migrants from Punjab, who wanted to go home but could not due to the lockdown, came to the gurdwara on the evening of March 29. They wanted to catch a bus to Punjab which plies from Majnu ka Tila, but since there was no arrangement for buses, they stayed back

5 THE OUTBREAK NATION

Shared Filipinos' travel history on Mar 18: Navi Mumbai civic body

200 who attended Tabligh event traced in Maharashtra, 39 in Mumbai alone

SADAF MODAK
MUMBAI, APRIL 1

MAHARASHTRA POLICE have so far traced over 200 people in the state who attended the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi that has emerged as a hotspot of the COVID-19 infection, police sources said.

Officials at the senior-most levels have been cagey about sharing the exact numbers officially, dismissing media queries as unwarranted, and describing the numbers as an "internal" matter. Police sources said 32 people have been traced to Mumbai, of whom 12 are foreign nationals. Details are still being gathered from all over the state.

On Wednesday, officials at the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) said they had provided all details of the 68-year-old Filipino national, who had arrived from Delhi on March 10 and was staying in a Vashi mosque. He is perhaps the first person who attended the Tablighi

Jamaat event at Delhi to test positive for COVID-19, but it remains unclear if any contact tracing was done in Delhi or by the Railways on the basis of details provided by the NMMC.

The 68-year old landed in Delhi on March 3 from Malaysia and was present at the headquarters of the group at Delhi's Nizamuddin. On March 9, he along with eight others — seven Filipino nationals and a Hyderabad resident accompanying them — boarded a train and reached Navi Mumbai on March 10.

Suffering from asthma and other ailments, the man's condition worsened while he was at the Vashi mosque and he was admitted to Kasturba Hospital on March 13 and diagnosed to be positive the next day.

The NMMC wrote emails to the Maharashtra public health department and the state police on March 14. On March 18, officials said, they shared all details of his travel history with a visiting official of National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Delhi.

"We thoroughly inquired into the travel history of the group and found out that they had taken a train from Delhi to Mumbai. We were told that they were at a mosque in Nizamuddin in Delhi," said a health official of the NMMC.

Members of the Vashi mosque's trust also said that they had cooperated with the NMMC officials and provided them with details about the itinerary of the group, including their train tickets from Delhi to Mumbai. "An email was sent to the BMC (Mumbai's civic body) and the state health department on March 14, informing them about this along with train tickets," said the official.

Following this, NMMC conducted tests on the rest of the group which had shifted to South Mumbai.

On March 16, two other Filipino nationals from the group also tested positive, while the rest tested negative.

"On March 18, there was a visit from the National Centre for

Disease Control, Delhi, wherein all the information was given regarding the index case (the 68-year old Filipino national)," NMMC chief Annasaheb Misal said.

An official said that the visit at the NMMC was by a member of the NCDC, an institute under the Indian Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The official said that the visit was to examine if proper protocols related to the outbreak were being followed. Detailed information about the Filipino group's travel, including their stay at the Nizamuddin headquarters, was shared then.

Officials said that follow-ups regarding the positive cases in NMMC and their contact tracing was also provided to the NCDC regularly. The 68-year-old tested negative in two subsequent tests and admitted to a private hospital late on March 22. He died on March 23 and was buried on March 24 after an NOC from his family.

10 Tablighi reached Telangana on March 13, met hundreds

RAHUL V PISHARODY
HYDERABAD, APRIL 1

A GROUP of 10 religious preachers from Indonesia, who tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Telangana, should have set alarm bells ringing in the country's fight against the spread of the disease. They had participated in the Tablighi Jamaat meeting at the Alami Markaz (headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat) in New Delhi's Nizamuddin, and had reached Ramagundam in Telangana on March 13 by AP Sampark Kranti Express before they were tested positive.

After all of them were shifted to Hyderabad's Gandhi general hospital by the rapid response team on March 16 — by when they had visited four mosques in Karimnagar district and met with hundreds of people — one among them, P-5, was the first to test positive on March 17.

Two days later, on March 19, the government announced P-7 to P-14, all Indonesian nationals, as positive for COVID-19. On March 20, another two Indonesians in the group, P-18, and P-19, tested positive.

On March 21 and 23, a 35-year-old man from Hyderabad and a 23-year-old man from Karimnagar who was in contact with the Indonesian group, were declared P-20 and P-30. While the state government cordoned off certain localities of the district as red zones, the district col-



Beds have been readied in Hyderabad. PTI

lector advised the locals who came in contact with the Indonesians to undergo diagnosis at Karimnagar government hospital.

On the evening of March 23, Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu announced a total, statewide lockdown until March 31.

Though all 10 Indonesian preachers had tested positive by March 20, it was only on March 30 that the state government asked the public to come forward and inform the health department if they had participated in the Tablighi Jamaat meeting in Delhi.

This was after six persons with a history of participation in the Nizamuddin Markaz meeting were declared dead in the state on March 30.

Was there a delay in sharing information with the Centre on the possibility of a COVID-19 cluster at Delhi's Nizamuddin?

State Health Minister Eatala Rajender told *The Indian Express*:

"The Centre should have been more active as more and more people who returned from Delhi's Markaz meeting were being tested positive in different states."

Pressed on whether he thought the Centre had failed to react promptly however, the minister said: "We cannot say that, and we should not say that. It is our collective responsibility and we should tackle it collectively."

On Wednesday, the health minister said that all barring 160-odd people among the 1,030 who had travelled to Delhi to participate in the Tablighi Jamaat meeting have been identified. "There is some duplication of names, some might have stayed back in Delhi. All those who are traced here would be screened, and those with symptoms would be tested for the disease," he said.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com



Stranded migrants wait in line for packed food in Chennai. PTI

UTTAR PRADESH Cops attacked for enforcing lockdown

Muzaffarnagar: A sub-inspector and a constable were seriously injured when a police team trying to enforce the lockdown was attacked by a group of villagers in Muzaffarnagar district on Wednesday, an official said. The police team was patrolling Morna village area and spotted the residents gathered outside, said Circle Officer Ram Mohan Sharma. When the villagers were asked to follow the prohibitory orders they started pelting stones and some of them even started attacking the officials with iron rods, Sharma said. PTI

BIHAR One arrested for spreading rumours

Patna: Sheohar Police on Wednesday arrested a person for creating panic among people by posting unverified information about COVID-19 on social media. The man was booked under provisions of The Epidemic Diseases Act, 1987, National Disaster Management Act, 2005, IPC and IT (Amendment) Act, 2008. Sheohar SP Sanjay Kumar Singh said: "We have arrested the man, who has been sent to judicial custody". ENS

Stuck in Jordan, film crew seeks aid

Kochi: A Malayalam film crew, comprising 58 people including actor Prithviraj and director Blessy, is stuck in Jordan due to flight restrictions. The crew, which was shooting a film titled *Aadujeevitham* is held up at Wadi Rum. The crew has sought assistance from Indian authorities. Prithviraj has confirmed the development in a Facebook post. PTI

Haryana traces 480 people who attended Tabligh event, search on for more

VARINDER BHATIA
CHANDIGARH, APRIL 1

HARYANA HAS traced at least 480 members of Tablighi Jamaat who attended a religious congregation in Delhi's Nizamuddin and then spread out across the state over the last fortnight. There is a possibility of this number crossing 500 as the state government agencies are still busy verifying the antecedents of about 30 more persons, identified as part of the congregation.

"All these persons have been rounded up and kept in isolation in state's various quarantine facilities. We collected information about these persons from the Intelligence Bureau and our police department and managed to track over 500 such persons. None of these will be able to go back to their places unless they complete their mandatory quarantine period," said Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar.

All the 480 identified till now, however, do not belong to Haryana. Many of them have come from other states or foreign countries.

Haryana's Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Vijai Vardhan said, "Although all have been traced and quarantined, we have prepared the dossiers of 480, including 89 foreigners and 391 Indians. The foreigners have come from Thailand, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, South Africa, Bangladesh and Malaysia. The 391 Indian nationals, besides from Haryana, belong to Assam, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh..."



SOCIAL DISTANCING

People queue up in front of a fair price shop in Kolkata on Wednesday. Partha Paul

Cabinet secy speaks to states on Tablighi Jamaat participants

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

CABINET SECRETARY Rajiv Gauba has told Chief Secretaries and police heads of states about the "intensive contact tracing of Tablighi Jamaat participants as this has increased the risk of containment efforts of COVID-19", the government said in a statement on Wednesday.

The states, the statement mentioned, "were asked to complete the contact tracing process on a war footing".

"It has been found that foreigners who had participated in the

Tablighi Jamaat had violated visa conditions. The state(s) were asked to initiate action for violation of visa conditions against the foreigners and the organisers of the event," the statement mentioned. Several people who attended the congregation, held in Delhi's Nizamuddin in mid-March, have tested positive for COVID-19 and five of them have died in Telangana.

At least 20 states are trying to identify the people who attended the congregation.

Apart from this issue, Gauba also asked the states during the video conference "to implement the PM Garib Kalyan Yojana

within the next week" which will include "large cash transfer to beneficiaries" and mentioned that it "should be organised in a staggered manner to ensure social distance".

The government mentioned in the statement that the "lockdown is being implemented effectively all over the country" and the states have been asked "to ensure that intra-state movement of goods is allowed without any hindrance while maintaining social distance".

The Union government also asked the states to ensure manufacturing of essential goods and to maintain their supply chains.

Don't sensationalise, make it communal: Kerala, Bengal

Goa CM criticises Tablighi Jamaat, says it has 'damaged the country'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, KOLKATA, PANAJI, APRIL 1

WITH many cases of coronavirus across the country linked to a gathering of the Muslim religious organisation Tablighi Jamaat, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday cautioned against giving the disease a communal colour.

At a press conference, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee said there was no need to "sensationalise" the Tablighi Jamaat issue.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, however, criticised the organisation, saying it had "damaged the country" and asking people to stay away from it.

Regretting the fact that social media was being used for a "communal harvest" over COVID-19, Pinarayi said,

"Coronavirus does not infect anyone looking at religion. What is important is that we stay together and remain vigilant. We should remember the exemplary action of all sections of society who have abandoned public gatherings at the behest of the government."

While 60 people in Kerala have been identified as having attended the gathering held in Delhi, around 70 in West Bengal have been traced back to it. Pinarayi said all those in the state who visited the meeting had been traced, and were under observation. "All of them have been quarantined. There is no need for any concern," he said.

Mamata said, "Fifty-four persons have been identified, including 40 foreigners. We came to know some persons in Dinajpur, Magrahat and other places are still unidentified. We are hopeful that within one day

we will identify 30 more persons and will send them to quarantine."

Nine people in Goa were Wednesday linked to the Delhi gathering, with their questioning on to determine if they knew of others who attended it. The nine, who came to Goa on March 11, are in quarantine.

Even as the Goa government appealed to people to voluntarily come forward if they had attended or come in contact with anyone who had been at the congregation, Sawant asked for "severe punishment" for those who had been part of it.

"The Tablighi Jamaat has damaged the country. They have put the country in trouble by the manner in which they allowed (COVID-19) to spread," the CM said at a press meeting. "We have to be careful about those from the Tablighi. They should be punished according to me."

183 who attended Tabligh event traced: Rajasthan DGP

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, APRIL 1

THE RAJASTHAN Police has traced 183 people who had visited the Markaz Nizamuddin, the headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat in New Delhi last month, officials said Wednesday.

Rajasthan's Director General of Police, Bhupendra Singh, said the state police has collected information about those in the state who visited Markaz or its surrounding localities. "So far, we have learnt about 183 such people — apart from 5 from Nepal. They include people from Jhunjhunu, Bikaner, Dausa, Alwar, Tonk, Sri Ganganagar, Bharatpur, Karauli, Jodhpur, Barmer, Hanumangarh, Churu, and Jaipur," Singh said.

He said the concerned District Magistrates and

Superintendents of Police have been directed to screen those identified and put them under quarantine or isolation.

Health Minister Raghu Sharma said that the state's Intelligence Department had collected the information after the outbreak was reported.

"The Health Department has issued an alert and the our teams are screening them," Sharma said.

Hundreds gather for Urs in Ajmer

Meanwhile, the Ajmer police on Tuesday had to resort to a mild lathicharge to disperse a gathering at the annual 'Urs' of Sufi mystic Khwaja Fakhruddin Chishti in Sarwar town, about 60 kilometres away from Ajmer.

The police have also arrested six people for defying the lockdown and going for the Urs.

Bihar traces 30 of 86 Tabligh returnees

Patna: The Bihar government has tracked down 30 of the 86 people who returned to Bihar after attending the Tablighi Markaz in New Delhi in March, officials said on Wednesday. Bihar's Principal Secretary (Health), Sanjay Kumar told *The Indian Express*: "We have tracked 17 people to Patna and 13 to Buxar and kept them in isolation after conducting tests."

Health Department officials said teams have been trying to trace other returnees in Katihar, Araria and Kishanganj.

Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi called for strict action against the organisers of the event. "Organising the Tablighi Markaz by calling over 3,000 people from across the country and abroad under such circumstances is a crime. This is not to benefit Islam, but to defame it..." ENS

Jharkhand lists 40 Tabligh visitors, many claim they didn't go there

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, APRIL 1

THE SPECIAL Branch of Jharkhand on Wednesday shared a list of 40 people who purportedly attended the Tablighi Jamaat event in Delhi's Nizamuddin in mid-March and had returned to the state over the last seven days, and who need medical examination.

The list is from all 24 districts of Jharkhand. Among them is a Jharkhand minister and JMM MLA's son, who was among those sent to quarantine on Wednesday.

While the list has names and contact numbers of 40 people, district officials on ground said most of them claimed they never visited Nizamuddin in the last seven days, as mentioned in the Special Branch document. Some have reportedly claimed they have never visited Markaz Nizamuddin at all, while some others claimed they had gone before March 2, according to officials. Jharkhand reported its first

COVID-19 case on Tuesday — a Malaysian national, who had attended the Tabligh event and had come to Ranchi on March 17.

A letter by the Special Branch, Jharkhand, dated March 30 sent to all Deputy Commissioners (DCs) and senior police officers stated in Hindi: "According to information received, people named in the list went to Nizamuddin and participated in Tablighi Jamaat's event and returned in the past seven days."

The letter, among others, then asks for their medical examinations to be conducted.

The Jharkhand minister, whose son's name features in the list, said: "My son never went to Nizamuddin, Delhi, in the last few months. I don't understand how his name figures in the list."

Deoghar DC Nancy Sahay said: "In my district, there are two persons in the Special Branch's list... One of them is the minister's son. Both claimed they never visited Nizamuddin, but we have sent them to quarantine and are getting call detail records to ascertain their travel

history. Tests have been conducted and we are awaiting the results."

In Dumka, one person named in the list purportedly did not visit Delhi, as per call detail records (CDR) ascertained by the district administration. Dumka DC Rajeshwari B said: "The man claimed that he had not gone to Nizamuddin. We checked CDR (of person's phone) and found that he did not move out of the state in the last few months..."

Dhanbad district has nine persons listed. Dhanbad DC Amit Kumar said: "A few claimed that they have not been to Nizamuddin, others claimed that they had gone before March 2. We are in the process of ascertaining their travel records."

Gumla DC and Hazaribagh DC also said that the people listed from their districts claimed they did not leave the state in recent times.

Jharkhand DGP M V Rao said, "Attending a religious congregation is not a crime. This is a crisis situation and we are taking all measures."

569 who attended Delhi markaz quarantined: UP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, APRIL 1

A DAY after identifying 157 persons from the state who had attended a congregation organised by the Tablighi Jamaat in Delhi's Nizamuddin area and tracing a majority of them traced there itself, Uttar Pradesh Police on Wednesday identified 569 more people who attended the gathering. All have been quarantined and so far no one has shown COVID-19 symptoms, police said.

The police also have so far traced 218 foreign nationals who had come to different Uttar Pradesh districts at different time periods on tourist visas. The police claimed that they have yet to get "confirmed details" about all these having attended the Nizamuddin congregation. An inquiry has been ordered into their visa details to look into whether they violated the norms, said a senior police officer.

In the state, as many as eight FIRs were registered against those who provided stay to these

foreign nationals and hid the information from the local administration.

"On Tuesday, after getting list of 157 persons who had attended the Delhi congregation, the police launched a search for them. Police found just nine of them had returned to Uttar Pradesh while others were still in Delhi. All nine persons were examined and later put under quarantine. During the process of checking across the state, police came to know there are many more who attended the congregation," a police officer said.

The police used surveillance and human intelligence to collect information about other people who had taken part in the congregation in Delhi, including foreign nationals, and accordingly conducted searches at different places in several districts as Hapur, Bhadohi, Prayagraj, Hathras, Kanpur, Aligarh, Bahraich, Badaun, Sitapur, Rampur and Shamli. In Bagpat, police found 17 Assam residents staying inside the mosque which was locked from outside, said a police officer.



CORONA WATCH



Police conduct a flag march in Navi Mumbai. PTI

UTTAR PRADESH
26 flee from quarantine, booked

Sultanpur: The police have booked 26 people for negligence after they fled from a quarantine facility in Uttar Pradesh's Gosaiganj area, an official said on Wednesday. SP Shivhari Meena said in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, 115 people who had returned from other states were kept at Gosaiganj's Kamla Nehru Institute. Of them, 26 fled on Tuesday night. They were caught by police and FIRs were lodged against them. Legal action will be taken against them after they complete quarantine, the SP added. PTI

MEGHALAYA
94 inmates released from Shillong Jail

Shillong: A total of 94 prisoners were released from the Shillong District Jail in Meghalaya as per the Supreme Court order to decongest prisons to check the spread of novel coronavirus, officials said on Wednesday. The decision was taken by a high-powered committee headed by Meghalaya High Court judge and Meghalaya State Legal Services Authority (MSLSA) executive chairman, Justice HS Thangkiew at a meeting held here on Tuesday, they said. PTI

Top court asks Michel to move HC for bail

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE SUPREME Court Wednesday asked VVIP chopper scam case-accused Christian Michel James to approach the Delhi High Court with his application for interim bail. A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah, which took up his plea for hearing through video conferencing, said it would be appropriate for the accused to move the HC for any relief. Michel, who is in judicial custody in Tihar jail, had approached SC citing the risk of coronavirus infection in crowded prisons.

Considering the possibility of the rapid spread of COVID-19 in prisons, the Supreme Court on March 23 had directed States and Union Territories to decongest jails by releasing convicts and under-trials facing a maximum seven-year sentence in prison and charges with provisions for the same, respectively.

Citing this order, Michel (59) said that his health condition was critical and he was already suffering from serious pathologies and would not be able to risk a COVID-19 infection. "The agedness and a pre-existing ill state of health will make the applicant's body more susceptible to the said infection than any other ordinary prisoner with a normal health condition," his plea contended.

'States have to do all the work, why were we not consulted?'

Chhattisgarh CM says country facing economic downfall over poor govt planning

GARGI VERMA
RAIPUR, APRIL 1

"THE CENTRAL government neither consulted us before enforcing the lockdown nor has it been able to handle the situation properly. We are looking at an economic downfall due to the central government's poor planning," Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel told *The Indian Express* on Wednesday. The Chief Minister sought that additional funds be deposited in Jan Dhan accounts as part of the Centre's relief package for weaker sections in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak.

"The central government has decided to send Rs 1,000 for each family. That is not enough. Had it been Rs 1,000 per person, it would have been of some help. We have written to the PM, requesting financial assistance for the poor," he said. Saying that the central government had failed to manage the ongoing health crisis, Baghel said, "The central government should have stopped



Bhupesh Baghel said more funds must be deposited in Jan Dhan accounts.

international flights long before they actually did. We were getting information about the spread of the disease. Right after the US president Donald Trump left, the country could have proactively stopped international flights and we would have avoided the crisis right now."

"Right now, all revenue generating exercises for the state have been stopped. So many workers across industries have left. Getting them back and en-

suring that the industries start functioning again will be an added burden. So many states have decided to impose wage cuts. No state would be happy in doing that. In Chhattisgarh, we are going to pay our employees, but the financial burden will be too much to bear," said the Chief Minister.

Baghel said the central government issued the lockdown order in haste and it is becoming problematic for the state government to implement.

"Who is bearing the brunt of the decision? Who has to implement the order and ensure that the public is well cared for? When the state government has to do all the work, why were we not consulted? We would have put our points forth and maybe this migrant situation could have been better handled," he said.

The Chief Minister has also written to other states, requesting them to take care of Chhattisgarh citizens stuck in different parts of the country. "I have said that all the migrants in the state are our guests. We are taking care of them and ensuring all help. I

have requested other chief ministers to do the same for our citizens stuck in their areas," he said.

"We are looking at a financial crisis in the near future. The only way out, according to me, is to ensure that the Rajiv Gandhi Nyay Yojna is enforced across the nation," Baghel said.

The Congress-led state government has already extended testing criteria for COVID-19, but Baghel alleged that the Centre is not helping them. "The central government's only job is to provide testing kits and PPEs, which they are failing to do. In India, very few people are being tested. In Chhattisgarh, however, we want to do more testing," he said.

On Wednesday, state Health Minister TS Singh Deo wrote to the Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, requesting guidelines on the 'use and purchase of rapid antibody testing kits'. The minister sought ICMR's help in using the rapid kits for early detection of the virus. "An expanded testing regime is necessary to contain the spread of pandemic," Singh Deo wrote.

KARNATAKA ROADS CLOSED

Clear blockade on highway, Kerala HC tells Centre

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 1

THE KERALA High Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to ensure that blockades put up by Karnataka on national highways connecting Kerala are removed forthwith in order to facilitate free movement of vehicles carrying people for urgent medical treatment between the two states.

The court's ruling comes after seven patients from Kerala's northernmost district bordering Karnataka, Kasaragod, who used to seek regular treatment at hospitals in nearby Mangaluru, Karnataka, died over the last one week after Karnataka banned entry for people and vehicles from Kasaragod, where more than 100 confirmed coronavirus cases have been reported.

On Wednesday, 12 fresh confirmed cases were reported in Kasaragod, taking the total in the district to 120. Fifty-four confirmed cases have been reported so far in neighbouring Kannur.

Wednesday's HC order, however, did not mention the blockade at the road between Thalassery (Kannur) and Kodagu (Karnataka) for moving essential items.

Posting the writ petition for further orders after three weeks, the court observed that there are other issues raised in the PIL, but the court has not expressed any opinion on those issues.

While hearing the petition, the Advocate General of Karnataka told the court that Kerala HC would be exceeding its jurisdiction if it issues any direction to Karnataka in this matter.

But the court said, "When a High Court of a State finds and declares the actions of the gov-

ernment of another State to be illegal and unconstitutional, the said state government would be obliged to defer to the said declaration of law by a Constitutional Court of this country, notwithstanding that the said court is situated beyond the territorial limits of the said state. The Karnataka government cannot therefore be heard to contend that it is not obliged to respect the fundamental right of a citizen who resides outside its territorial limits."

The High Court's direction to find an amicable solution did not materialise after Karnataka remained adamant on the road blockade.

The counsel representing Karnataka told the court that the petitioner, Kerala HC Advocates' Association, should seek a direction to the Kerala government for treatment of patients in Kasaragod, instead of Mangaluru.

At this, Justice A K Jayasankaran Nambiar asked whether a patient in Kerala who is closer to hospitals in Mangaluru should go a faraway hospital in Kerala in an emergency situation. "We are not speaking of two countries here," Justice Nambiar observed.

The seven patients - all of them not related to coronavirus - died after vehicles carrying them for treatment were stopped at the inter-state checkpoint, and while they were subsequently being rushed to faraway hospitals in Kerala.

Kasaragod is just over 50 km from Mangaluru, and more than 90 km from Kannur, the nearest big city in the state. Many people from the district depend on Mangaluru and other towns in nearby Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka for treatment such as dialysis and extensive health check-ups besides essentials.

For Kerala, protecting primary contacts new challenge

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 1

AROUND 25 PER CENT of COVID-19 cases in Kerala are primary contacts of affected persons with a history of travel to coronavirus-hit countries, according to figures stated by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday.

"Of the 265 confirmed cases in Kerala so far, 191 were non-resident Keralaites who came from other countries to the state, seven were foreign nationals and 67 got the infection through direct (primary) contact. Twenty-six patients, including four foreigners, have been discharged," Vijayan said after a review.

Primary contacts also made up a significant proportion of the new cases reported on Wednesday. Kerala saw 24 fresh coronavirus cases, 15 of which were primary contacts. Kasaragod, a COVID-19 hotspot, made up half of Wednesday's cases, with 10 primary contacts.

An official said most of the positive cases in the last one week have been those who returned from abroad.

"Now, we have to see how many of their primary contacts have got infected," the official said.

The official said the shift to primary contacts getting tested positive is a matter of concern, although it did not indicate community spread. "We have been constantly highlighting home quarantine, but now we realise that not all of the persons who returned from abroad and later tested positive followed the strict quarantine regimen."

In Kasaragod, the positive cases rose to 120. The district, which has 1,271 persons in the list of primary contacts, is awaiting test results of 371 persons.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Tunnel blocked, migrants die of cold on mountain route

ARUN SHARMA
JAMMU, APRIL 1

DENIED PASSAGE through the Jawahar Tunnel to their homes in Jammu, a group of migrants working in Kashmir took a perilous detour through the snow-clad higher reaches of the Pir Panjal range - a decision that proved fatal for three of them, and left another seriously injured.

While three people from the group made it home safely on Tuesday night, Zubair Ahmed (18), Riyaz Ahmed (19), Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din (30) and Parvaiz Ahmed got stuck at Nagimandu, nearly 5 km from Duligam.

As they did not reach home till Wednesday morning, the police, army and locals launched a search for them, only to find them trapped in 4-5 feet of snow.

Ilyas Banihali, the head of NGO Crisis Management, who, along with his volunteers, was among the first to reach the victims, said two of the deceased were found alive and even asked for warm water from the villagers.

Before they could be taken to a hospital, however, they breathed their last.

The two teenagers and Mohi-ud-din appeared to have died of extreme cold, he said. The injured man, Parvaiz Ahmed, has been hospitalised at Banihali and his condition is stated to be stable.

Ramban SSP Haseeb-ur-Rehman said they had chosen



An Army team assembling to bring down the deceased and injured labourers to Banihali. Express

to cut short their journey through the mountains, fearing they might not be allowed to pass through Jawahar Tunnel which connects Kashmir's Anantnag district with Jammu's Ramban.

All three deceased were residents of Hinghal village in Ramban district. While two teens were employed at a fast food joint in the Valley, Mohi-ud-Din was a labourer.

The latter, said villagers, had almost made it home, but returned to rescue the other three, fearing that they were lost.

Parvaiz's father, Abdul Majid, said that a vehicle on Monday dropped the group at Qazigund, and from there, they walked nearly 25 km to reach Jawahar Tunnel-only to be denied passage through it. Instead

of returning to Srinagar, they went towards Veerinaag's Kapran village and stayed at a madrasa for the night. On Tuesday morning, they decided to take an alternate and shorter route through a mountainous peak over Jawahar Tunnel, he added.

Several cases of migrants taking mountainous routes have emerged in recent days. On Tuesday, the police arrested 33 labourers in Doda district who had walked through passes that were closed for heavy snow.

The same day, the Army intercepted 21 labourers and two students who were heading towards Rajouri district's Thanamandi area from Srinagar via Mughal Road. All of them had run out of supplies.

2 more dead in Mumbai, one from Dharavi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, NAGPUR, APRIL 1

WITH TWO COVID-19 patients dying in Mumbai, the death toll due to the pandemic reached 19 in Maharashtra on Wednesday, with the total number of cases rising to 335 across the state.

While a 56-year-old Dharavi man succumbed at Sion hospital on Wednesday, a 63-year-old man from Malvani, who had tested positive on Tuesday, died in the evening. The senior citizen, a Muslim, was cremated after the trustees of a burial ground in Malvani refused to bury the body.

The family of the deceased alleged that initially, the doctors had refused to hand over the body to the relatives on the ground that as per norms laid down by the BMC, it had to be cremated. The family went on to approach a local corporator, who convinced the doctors to hand over the body for burial. However, as the burial ground refused to bury the body, it was created at a crematorium in Kandivali.

The state on Wednesday reported 33 new cases.

Eight to 10 family members of the Dharavi resident have been put in quarantine. The Mumbai Police, along with the BMC, has sealed eight Slum Rehabilitation Authority buildings in Dharavi.

The civic body has begun contact tracing in the area.

Raagi who performed kirtan in front of 100 people tests positive

KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR
AMRITSAR, APRIL 1

A FORMER Hazoori Raagi of the Golden Temple was put on ventilator at Government Medical College, Amritsar, Wednesday evening after he tested positive for COVID-19. Sources said the 67-year-old was suffering from bronchial asthma.

It was not immediately clear how the celebrated raagi had contracted the virus. He had been under the scanner of health authorities since the first week of March when he had guests from the US, and was admitted in the Government Medical College on March 30. His travel history was not clear till Tuesday evening.

It has now been found that on March 19, he visited a house in

Sector 27 A, Chandigarh, where performed kirtan in the presence of around 100 people. He returned to Amritsar on March 20.

After returning from Chandigarh, the raagi visited Guru Nanak Dev Hospital of Government Medical College Amritsar to report symptoms on March 21. However, doctors sent him back home after prescribing some medicine. His condition didn't improve, so he contacted Sri Guru Ram Das Institute of Medical Science & Research in Amritsar on March 24. He was treated there and sent back home. He was again admitted to SGRIMSAR on March 30, from where he was again referred to GNDH.

Despite his history, he was initially treated in the emergency ward, then sent to flu ward, and finally to isolation.

MHA tells states to ensure full lockdown

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

WITH COVID-19 cases more than doubling since the lockdown began on March 24, the Centre has pressed states to strictly implement the directive.

In a letter sent to Chief Secretaries of all states, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) frowned upon states making exceptions to the guidelines issued by the ministry on March 24 and onwards.

"It has been noticed that some state governments/UT administrations are allowing exceptions beyond what has been allowed under lockdown measures by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), as contained in the Consolidated Guidelines noted above. This amounts to violation of the lockdown measures issued by MHA under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, and may defeat the overall objective of containing the spread of COVID-19 in the country," said the letter signed by Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla and sent on Tuesday.

The Centre issued detailed guidelines on March 24, March 25 and March 27, and followed them up with a consolidated guideline. These included a list of essential goods and services which were to be allowed during the 21-day lockdown.

The home ministry did not clarify what kind of violations it was referring to. However, sources said certain states have allowed manufacturing of certain non-essential items or allowed certain factories to function in limited and contained manner.

Notably, on March 24, when the lockdown was announced, there were 519 COVID-19 cases in the country. The number increased to 1,397 on Tuesday, when the letter was sent.

New Lancet study puts China's death per virus infections rate at 0.66%

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

AN AVERAGE coronavirus patient may be in hospital for about 25 days and the mean duration from the onset of symptoms to death is about 18 days, a study in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* has said. The study also concluded that the overall infection fatality rate for China, where coronavirus first hit, was 0.66%, though adding that it remained a major global crisis.

Researchers from Imperial College, London, had earlier said that the 'crude fatality ratio' was about 3.67%, which is on a par with WHO estimates. The crude rate does not take into account the severity of the infection, which means it just compared the total number of cases with the total number of deaths. Infection fatal-

The mean duration from the onset of symptoms to death is about 18 days

ity ratio takes into account the total number of people that might carry the virus, without showing symptoms and hence being tested for it or requiring hospitalisation. These people are not a part of the official number of "cases". As per the Lancet study, severity of coronavirus depends on the age of a patient, and the overall case fatality ratio (number of deaths per positive cases) could be 1.38%. In those above 60 years, it was found to be 6.4%; in those above 80 years, 13.4%; and in people aged below 60 years, 0.32%.

On 24 deaths that occurred in mainland China and 165 recoveries outside of China, we estimated the mean duration from onset of symptoms to death to be 17-8 days and to hospital discharge to be 24.7 days. In all laboratory confirmed and clinically diagnosed cases from mainland China (70,117), we estimated a crude case fatality ratio (adjusted for censoring) of 3-67%. However, after further adjusting for demography and under-ascertainment, we obtained a best estimate of the case fatality ratio in China of 1-38%, with substantially higher ratios in older age groups (0-32% in those aged <60 years vs 6-4% in those aged =60 years), up to 13-4% in those aged 80 years or older."

Outlining the implications of the study, the researchers said, "Our estimates of the case fatality ratio for COVID-19, although lower than some of the crude es-

timates made to date, are substantially higher than for recent influenza pandemics (eg, H1N1 influenza in 2009). With the rapid geographical spread observed to date, COVID-19 therefore represents a major global health threat in the coming weeks and months. Our estimate of the proportion of infected individuals requiring hospitalisation, when combined with likely infection attack rates (around 50-80%), show that even the most advanced health-care systems are likely to be overwhelmed. These estimates are therefore crucial to enable countries around the world to best prepare as the global pandemic continues to unfold."

Till April 1, 8.53 lakh cases of COVID-19 had been reported world-wide, with 41,887 deaths. China has seen 82,295 cases and 3,310 deaths.

STATUS CHECK IN THE STATES			
State	No. of people in quarantine	No. of people in isolation	No. of people in hospital
Chhattisgarh	51,935 (Home) 167 (Govt facilities)	Nil	7
Tamil Nadu	77,330	995	Not available
Andhra Pradesh	143	1,313	87
Telangana	Around 25,000	1,069	81
Kerala	1,63,508	622	
West Bengal	57,988	247 (Hospital)	Not available
Assam	Not available	62,397 (Home)	13
Madhya Pradesh	Not available	450 (Hospital) 3141 (Home)	Not available
Gujarat	19,206*	Not available	67
Karnataka	6,248 (Home)	367 (Hospital)	98
Bihar	Around 4,000 (Hospitals) 20,000 (Schools)	Over 500	About 1,500
Rajasthan	2,45,086 (Home) 2,955 (Institutions)	302	103
Maharashtra	24,818 (Home) 1,828**	1,299	3,127
Haryana	Not available	Not available	347
Goa	942	157	102
Uttarakhand	9,650*	Not available	Not available

*Home and institutions

**Institutional quarantine

7 EXPRESS NETWORK



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



VIRUS IN THE AIR

SOON AFTER the nationwide lockdown was announced on March 24, it appears several All India Radio stations also went down, amidst some confusion. On Monday, I&B Minister Prakash Javadekar lambasted officials stating that all stations must start working immediately, as it is the radio's job to disseminate credible information at national and regional levels. Accordingly, AIR advised that entertainment and light programmes should be given precedence on all channels, interspersed with information on COVID-19. Incidentally, since the lockdown was announced, one of the most popular AIR channels, FM Gold, has been converted to a 24-hour news channel. The staff has been asking their higher-ups, including Prasar Bharati CEO Shashi Shekhar Vempati, to resume regular telecast of the channel, which already included 30 per cent of news as content. However, while they have said they are ready to come to work, they are still waiting for a call.

LIMITING THE NUMBERS

TO GUARD against a huge rush for withdrawal of money following its transfer of Rs 500 each to 20 crore women Jan Dhan account holders as part of coronavirus relief measures, the government has advised that their arrival be staggered, whether to bank branches, banking correspondents or ATMs. On Wednesday, the Ministry of Finance sent the schedule out as per the last digit of the account number of the beneficiaries. Hence, those whose account numbers end in 0 or 1 can withdraw money on April 3; the ones with 2 or 3 at the end, on April 4; with 4 or 5 on April 7; 6 or 7 on April 8; and 8 or 9 on April 9. After April 9, beneficiaries can go on any date as per normal banking hours.

MOTHER CARE

AMONG THE 115 Indians stranded in the Netherlands while on their way back from North America was a pregnant woman. The Indian Embassy in the Netherlands did not just organise a special flight to get them back to India on March 22 but also went out of its way to ease her journey. A woman diplomat accompanied her to a local hospital in Amsterdam for emergency medical assistance before the flight took off.

New domicile rules for J&K, little job protection for locals

NAVEED IQBAL
SRINAGAR, APRIL 1

EIGHT MONTHS after the special status of Jammu and Kashmir was revoked, followed by its reorganisation into two Union territories, the Centre redefined its domicile and recruitment rules, effectively opening its government jobs except Level 4 to anyone from the rest of the country. Under the J&K Reorganisation (Adaptation of State Laws) Order 2020, issued through a gazette notification on Tuesday, 29 laws were repealed and 109 others amended. Section 3A under the J&K Civil Services (Decentralisation and Recruitment) Act — which was a part of the notification — defines a domicile as an individual “who has resided for a period of fifteen years in the UT of J&K or has studied for a period of seven years and appeared in class 10th/12th examination in an educational institution located in the UT of J&K”.

Political parties in J&K questioned the intent and timing of the order, especially with the country in the midst of a coronavirus pandemic. Since the abro-

gation of Article 370, parties cutting across the Jammu and Kashmir divide have been seeking preservation of domicile rights of its residents.

Earlier, a “permanent resident” of J&K had to be born there while one could become a “state subject”, with exclusive rights to residence, employment, education, contesting elections and property in the state. Now, the definition has been expanded to also include children of Central government officials, All India Service officers, officials of PSUs and autonomous bodies of the Central government, public sector banks, officials of statutory bodies, officials of central universities and recognised research institutes of the Central government who have served in J&K “for a total period of ten years”.

Additionally, anyone registered as a migrant by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (Migrants) in the UT of J&K will also be included as a domicile; as will be children of those J&K residents who live outside but whose parents fulfill any of the conditions above.

The new law provides limited protections for jobs up to the pay scale of Rs 25,500, but any-

one from the rest of the country can apply for all other posts. The Level 4 (Classes C and D) jobs that will see J&K quota include lower constabulary, junior assistants and entry level non-gazetted posts.

A tahsildar has been made the competent authority for issuing a domicile certificate, as opposed to deputy commissioners or officers notified for this earlier.

Former chief minister Omar Abdullah, who was recently released from detention, called the timing of the order suspect. “At a time when all our efforts & attention should be focused on the #COVID outbreak the government slips in a new domicile law for J&K. Insult is heaped on injury when we see the law offers none of the protections that had been promised,” he tweeted.

The National Conference leader added, “If Govt of India has the time to issue a domicile law in the midst of this #COVID crisis why can't they find the time to release @MehboobaMufti, Sagar Sahib & other leaders unjustly detained?”

The J&K Apni Party (JKAP), a new political front seen to have the backing of the Centre, also took “strong exception” to the

move. Party president Altaf Bukhari demanded that “the order be put in abeyance till the COVID-19 pandemic is over”. “While the JKAP has been vehemently demanding domicile rights on land and jobs for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the order issued by the Union government reflects a casual exercise carried out at a bureaucratic level without taking aspirations and expectations of the people into consideration,” he said.

The PDP termed the move “frighteningly ambivalent and irresolute”. Party general secretary and former MLC Surinder Choudhary said the order was “ill-timed, very badly drafted and the outcome of a confused and chaotic bureaucracy”.

Senior CPM J&K leader Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami said the move would “escalate fears among the residents of Jammu and Kashmir of losing not only jobs but also land to outsiders” post the revocation of special status.

Sajjad Lone's People's Conference said the fact that only Level 4 jobs had been reserved was “humiliating”, adding to the “insult” of abrogation of Article 370.

Govt to accept foreign contribution to PM-CARES fund

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

AS THE COVID-19 outbreak hits the economy, the government has decided to accept contributions from abroad, “irrespective of their nationalities”, to the newly-established Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES) Fund, sources said on Wednesday.

This would mean that foreign governments, NGOs, and national associations can now contribute to the Fund. This is a major policy change since New Delhi has not accepted foreign aid in the past 16 years since the then UPA government under Manmohan Singh decided to not accept aid from foreign sources.

Sources said this is an “unprecedented situation”. “So, the government took this decision”, the source said, adding that it was not “aid”. Sources also underlined that the foreign contribution is “only” applicable to the PM-CARES fund and not any other fund, like the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund.

The source said PM-CARES was set up following requests from India and abroad from individuals and organisations willing to make contributions to support the government in its fight against COVID-19. “In view of the interest expressed to contribute to the government's efforts, as well as keeping in mind the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, contributions to the trust can be done by individuals and organisations, both in India and abroad,” the source said.

In 2018, the government refused to accept foreign aid to flood-ravaged Kerala since it was following the disaster aid policy

set in December 2004.

After a tsunami hit India in December 2004, the government felt that it could cope up on its own. Since then, Delhi had followed the policy of not accepting aid from foreign governments.

PM-CARES, which was set up as a public charitable trust with the trust deed registered on March 27, is meant for supporting “relief or assistance of any kind relating to a public health emergency or any other kind of emergency, calamity or distress, either man-made or natural, including the creation or upgradation of healthcare or pharmaceutical facilities, other necessary infrastructure, funding relevant research or any other type of support”. The emphasis on ‘public health’ and ‘healthcare’ make it an appropriate vehicle to deal with the outbreak. The PM-CARES has the Prime Minister as chairperson, and the Defence Minister, Home Minister, Finance Minister and three trustees nominated by the Prime Minister “who shall be eminent persons in the field of research, health, science, social work, law, public administration and philanthropy”.

PM-CARES is different from PMNRF, which was created in 1948. It was founded against the backdrop of the situation arising out of Partition and was used for relief and rehabilitation of refugees from Pakistan who came to India. It was registered as a trust in 1973 with responsibilities of the trustees not clearly defined. The resources of PMNRF are now utilised primarily to provide relief to families of those killed in natural calamities. Donations to both funds can avail 100 per cent tax exemption.

(WITH INPUTS FROM KRISHN KAUSHIK)



WORRIED MIND, RELAXED BODY

With industry and construction at a standstill, daily wagers relax during the lockdown in Mumbai on Wednesday. Prashant Nadkar

70TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDIA-CHINA DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

COVID-19 a reminder of interconnected world, need for global response: PM

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE COVID-19 pandemic is a “reminder to us of the interconnected nature of our world today and the need therefore to adopt a truly global response to it”, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a message to Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Wednesday.

Modi said that he looks forward to working with Li to “further deepen and strengthen our closer developmental partnership and take it to even greater heights in the years to come”. This was part of the Indian



PM Modi spoke to Chinese Premier Li Keqiang

leadership's message to the Chinese leadership, as both sides exchanged messages of felicitation between the Presidents, Prime Ministers and External Affairs Ministers on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the establish-

ment of diplomatic relations between India and China on April 1. In his letter to China's President Xi Jinping, President Ram Nath Kovind conveyed warm greetings, felicitations and good wishes to China's government and its people. He observed that the two sides have made “considerable progress, especially in the last few years in enhancing our bilateral engagement in a number of areas, including political, economic and people-to-people ties.”

His Chinese counterpart noted in his message that China-India relations have travelled a “remarkable journey” in the last seven decades. Xi said, accord-

ing to a statement from the Chinese embassy: “I place great importance on this partnership and am ready to work with President Kovind to take it to a new level. A stronger China-India relationship will bring more benefits to our two countries and peoples and contribute more positive energy to Asia and the world at large.”

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, in his letter to Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, said that due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the two sides have been “unable to carry out the various activities that had been planned to celebrate this historic anniversary”.

Over 20 crore women to get first instalment of relief this week

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

OVER 20 crore women Jan Dhan account holders will get Rs 500 this week as the first monthly instalment of the ex-gratia announced under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana package in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak. The Centre has entrusted the Ministry of Rural Development with the implementation of this component of the relief package.

“The first tranche of this benefit is likely to be credited into beneficiary accounts within the first week of April 2020,” Rural Development Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said in a letter to Chief Secretaries of all states on Tuesday.

Bhushan said, “Fund for the said purpose would be provided for by Department of Rural Development, through Central Nodal Bank (State Bank of India) which will further transmit funds to other participating banks according to the list provided by Department of Financial Services (DFS).”

“The funds so transferred to the banks must be credited to the account of beneficiaries immediately on receipt of funds for this purpose,” he added.

According to sources, there are about 20.39 crore women account holders under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana and these accounts are spread across 32 banks which include public sec-

tor banks, private banks and regional rural banks.

Last week, the government had announced that all the women Jan Dhan Account holders will be provided a one-time ex-gratia payment of Rs 500 per month for the next three months — May, June and July — in view of the outbreak.

It is learnt that an amount of more than Rs 10,000 crore will be required for the first tranche and this will be provided to Ministry of Rural Development under a new budget head created under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission.

A source said, “The money will be transferred to SBI, which is the central nodal bank, Thursday and immediately, it will start being credited into accounts of the women Jan Dhan account holders.”

Out of the total women PMJDY accounts, 75-8 crore are in SBI and it can credit up to 1.5 crore accounts in a day. So, it is expected that those who have Jan Dhan accounts in SBI will get the first tranche in the next three-four days, said sources. Sources said the amount will be credited to the accounts through the Direct Benefit Transfer platform and will be tracked using Public Financial Management System.

Meanwhile, Bhushan has asked states to spread awareness about the scheme and facilitate withdrawal of the amount by the beneficiaries while adhering to norms of social distancing.

NIA files case over Kabul gurdwara attack

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE NIA Wednesday filed an FIR over the March 25 attack on a gurdwara in Kabul. It is the first case registered by an Indian agency over a terror attack on foreign soil.

The attack which killed 27 people was allegedly carried out by three Islamic State terrorists, one of whom was later identified as a resident of Kasargod in Kerala.

The agency has registered the case on the basis of one of the victims being an Indian. The NIA Act was amended last year giving the agency powers to register cases regarding attacks on foreign shores if the victims were Indian citizens.

“On 25th of March 2020, unknown gunmen had stormed into a gurdwara in Shor Bazar area in Kabul Afghanistan and fired indiscriminately, killing 27 devotees and injuring several others. About 150 persons were inside the gurdwara when the attack took place. An Indian citizen Tian Singh/s/o Jeet Singh, r/o S-364 Greater Kailash Part-1, New Delhi was also killed in the attack,” an NIA statement said on Wednesday.



Twenty-seven were killed in the attack carried out by IS terrorists.

“Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) had claimed the responsibility for this terror attack. As per the preliminary investigation, one Muhsin from Trikarpur, Kasargod, Kerala and others who had joined ISKP, are suspected to have been involved in the said terrorist attack. This is the first case of its kind which NIA has registered as the recent amendments in NIA Act have empowered NIA to investigate terror cases which are committed at any place outside India against the Indian Citizens or affecting the interest of India,” NIA said.

IS mouthpiece Amaq agency had earlier issued a statement claiming the attack to be a revenge for Kashmir.

CBSE not to conduct some board exams disrupted by COVID-19

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE CENTRAL Board of Secondary Education on Wednesday took the unprecedented decision that it will not conduct some of its annual board examinations which have been disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic and the national lockdown.

As a precautionary measure against the spread of the virus, the central education board had postponed all board examinations which were to be held between March 19 and March 31. Even before that, it had post-

poned examinations for four days in North East Delhi because of the riots there.

On Wednesday, the board announced that it has decided to only conduct 29 of those examinations which had been postponed in various regions — only for “main subjects that will be required for promotion and maybe crucial for admissions in higher educational institutions.”

This means that examinations for the various regional and foreign languages offered by the board will not be conducted for Class XII this year, as will be the case with ICT and computer applications for Class X students.

Across the country, 12 exams will be held on later dates — yet to be announced — for students of Class XII, while an additional 11 will be conducted for students of that grade from North East Delhi. No more examinations will be held for Class X students while six will only be held for students from North East Delhi.

“...at this stage it is difficult for the Board to decide and announce the new schedule for examinations... the Board will give notice of about 10 days to all stakeholders before starting the Board examinations,” read a statement by CBSE secretary Anurag Tripathi.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, APRIL 1

FAIZABAD police on Wednesday lodged an FIR against an unknown editor of *The Wire* for allegedly making derogatory remarks against Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in his blog, at the City Kotwali police station.

In another FIR lodged at Ayodhya police station in Faizabad, a local resident named Harvajan Goud lodged an FIR against one “Siddharth” for allegedly making objectionable remarks against Adityanath in a tweet.

The first FIR has been lodged against an “editor of *The Wire* (name and address unknown)” under IPC Section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) and 505(2) (statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill between classes). The complainant in the case is the station house officer, Citykotwali police station, Nitish Kumar Srivastava.

The second case was lodged under IPC Sections 188 and 505(2), and also under Section 66D of The Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008, police said.

In a statement, Siddharth

Varadarajan, Founding Editor of *The Wire*, described the FIR as a “blatant attack on the freedom of the press”.

According to Srivastava's FIR, the editor of *The Wire* had written: “On the day the Tablighi Jamaat event was held. Yogi Adityanath insisted that a large fair planned for Ayodhya on the occasion of Ram Navami from March 25 to April 2 would proceed as usual while Acharya Paramhans said that Lord Ram would protect devotees from the coronavirus. One day after [Prime Minister Narendra] Modi announced the curfew like national lockdown on March 24,

Adityanath violated the official guidelines to take part in a religious ceremony in Ayodhya along with dozens of people.”

Srivastava said: “Investigation would be conducted in the case.”

In his statement, Varadarajan said: “I have come to know through social media that an FIR has been registered under Section 188 and 505(2) of the IPC against *The Wire*.”

“A bare perusal of the FIR shows that it is politically motivated and the offences invoked are not even remotely made out. The registration of an FIR is a blatant attack on the freedom of the

press.

“The government of Yogi Adityanath in Uttar Pradesh does not seem to have learnt anything despite the strictures passed against it by the Supreme Court in June 2019 when the court ordered the release of the journalist Prashant Kanojia whom the state had illegally arrested. The right to liberty is a fundamental right and non-negotiable, the court had 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.”



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

FACTS FIGHT FEAR

SC is right, pandemic must be accurately reported. But, as court knows well, the official account isn't the only one that matters

IN TIMES OF crisis, especially a health crisis without prophylactic or cure, clear messaging by those in charge based on credible information is imperative. So is creating a space where questions can be asked and addressed given the countless unknowns about the outbreak and its fallout. Science and facts are antidotes to fear and panic. The Supreme Court rightly directed the government to activate a mechanism for delivering official updates on the coronavirus crisis and measures to contain it every 24 hours. Indeed, officials of the Ministries of Home, Health and ICMR have been holding useful daily briefings on the pandemic. But this official explanation and version does not and cannot do justice to the unfolding story. It must be supplemented by the news — including and especially bad news. The government, and the court hearing its solicitor general, blamed the exodus of migrant workers from the cities into the countryside on fake news. Yes, fear — and a phone forward — is fertile ground for rumour but absence of credible communication and assurances from the government also contribute. A daily press conference, where questions are fielded and answered, however uncomfortable — even ignorant — is the most effective way of a government reaching citizens during a crisis. Especially when they need guidance on issues that affect their life and livelihood, details needed to make decisions and secure lives. These are not issues for a Prime Minister's address to the nation — they need daily reinforcement.

The only official communications that the migrants received were delivered by the policeman's heavyhandedness, and his lathi. On the other hand, it was extensive and sustained media reporting on the developing crisis which prompted governments at the Centre and in the states to step in to contain the exodus and deliver support to the migrants. Even now, the solicitor general's statement presents the damage as mainly epidemiological, rather than human. If the press had relied on the official version, the magnitude of the crisis would not have come to light, for the government to address.

As WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has said, humanity is fighting two foes — a pandemic and an "infodemic". But the antidote is not to rely on an authorised version, which could gloss over unpleasant truths, but informed choice. The media is the enabler of that choice. It was put on the list of essential services during the lockdown so that it could bring credible news of the pandemic both to the people and the government. It has done its job and will continue to do so — that is an essential service protected by the Constitution.

SPEND WISELY

Governments should review revenue assumptions and expenditure allocations, curb non-essential spending

DAYS AFTER THE monetary policy committee of the Reserve Bank of India cut the benchmark repo rate by 75 basis points, the central government lowered the interest rate on small savings schemes to facilitate faster transmission of the rate cuts to the broader economy. Banks are fearful that any cuts in their deposit rates — which lowers their cost of funds enabling them to lend at lower rates — will lead to a flight of deposits towards small savings instruments which offer higher rates. Thus, high interest rates on these small savings schemes are one of the key factors that impede monetary transmission in the economy. The RBI had earlier pointed out that the small savings rates of various schemes were 18-62 basis points higher than what they should have been as per the prescribed formula. Thus, lowering these rates will improve the transmission of the rate cuts, lowering the cost of capital to the broader economy.

But while this step, and others announced recently, are much needed, they need to be supplemented by fiscal measures to lessen the pain. The fiscal response to the crisis should be structured at two levels. First, ensure adequate cash to liquidity constrained households as well as uninterrupted supply of essential goods and services during the lockdown. And second, a bold stimulus package for after the lockdown is lifted. While the government has already announced a package aimed at addressing the cash constraints of households, the size of the transfer appears to be modest and will need to be supplemented. Given the continuing uncertainty over the spread of the virus, and its impact on economic activity, it will be difficult at this stage to estimate the size of the fiscal stimulus needed. But a fiscal expansion is inescapable. Perhaps mindful of the stress on finances, some state governments have in recent days spoken of cuts in salaries of government employees. While those positions have softened since, and salary payments will be made in a staggered manner, they nonetheless underline the severity of the economic distress. This is an unprecedented situation. But rather than cut back salaries, especially of those at the frontlines of fighting this crisis, a more prudent approach would be to rework general government (Centre and state) expenditure allocations.

As most state budgets, as well as the Union budget, were presented well before the economic disruption of the coronavirus, it would be prudent for both levels of government to reevaluate their budget maths — reexamine their revenue growth assumptions, and reassess expenditure allocations. Careful consideration should be placed on curbing non-essential and discretionary spending, minimising wasteful expenditure, and in finding resources to spend on priority areas.

CELEBRITY JHAADU

For Bollywood stars in lockdown, household chores have been elevated to a performing art

IT IS IMPORTANT in the times of COVID-19 that housework is not just done, but is also seen to be done. And, when it comes to public displays of the pointless, the stars of tinsel town are at the forefront. They are breaking new ground in a variety of fields: There is dishwashing as a performing art, the sport of *jhaadu*, and the humble *pochha* has been elevated to an A-list accessory. Katrina Kaif is washing dishes, Karisma Kapoor is baking a cake and Shilpa Shetty is sweeping. Preity Zinta, clearly an over-achiever, has made masala dosa. Male celebrities are following a similar trend, though the ones with children seem to be getting out of work by posting photos of "daddy time".

In the age of the internet — with Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hotstar, etc — with so much viewing to catch up on, one would have thought that what people really want to see actors do is act. Not so. The same tasks that are invisibilised in privileged homes — usually done by underpaid, informal migrant labour — are all the rage because the rich and famous decided to perform what is often derided as "unskilled" labour. And maybe that's where the silver lining lies. When the lockdown is over, the quarantine done, there will hopefully be a greater appreciation for all the work, and all the people, that make possible the lives of privilege.

Cooking, cleaning and rearing of children are outsourced by many in India, making their white-collar careers possible. If watching celebrities do these task helps gain a greater appreciation of them, and hopefully translates into treating and paying workers in a commensurate manner, all the better. As for the celebrities, so used to constant attention and left without movies to promote or parties to be photographed at, it must be good to know that all they need to do is post a video on social media. People will watch anything.



ROBERT J BARRO

THE ANXIETY OVER the ongoing new coronavirus pandemic from COVID-19 has motivated people to look for lessons from history, notably from the 1918-1920 Great Influenza Pandemic, often mislabeled as the Spanish Flu. While it is reasonable to look at the 1918-1920 event as a plausible worst-case scenario, the inferences have been clouded by the use of incomplete or incorrect data.

In an ongoing study (Robert Barro, Jose Ursua, and Joanna Weng, "The Coronavirus and the Great Influenza Epidemic: Lessons from the 'Spanish Flu' for the Coronavirus's Potential Effects on Mortality and Economic Activity," National Bureau of Economic Research, working paper no. 26866, March 2020), we assembled annual data on flu death rates for 43 countries from 1918 to 1920. These countries represent about 90 per cent of world population at the time. The numbers indicate a death rate out of the total world population of 2.0 per cent, corresponding to 39 million fatalities. These numbers likely represent the highest worldwide mortality from a "natural disaster" in modern times, though the impact of the plague during the Black Death in the 14th century was much greater as a share of the population.

The flu death rates from 1918 to 1920 varied sharply across countries, with the highest in India, 5.2 per cent, followed by South Africa at 3.4 per cent and Indonesia at 3.0 per cent. The rate in Spain was not special, 1.4 per cent — the pandemic should not be called the Spanish Flu, and a better name is the Indian Flu. The United States was much lower than the average, 0.5 per cent. Australia avoided the flu in 1918 by employing an extreme maritime quarantine and ultimately had a comparatively low death rate of 0.3 per cent. Of particular relevance to the current crisis is that Australia's preventative actions did not just postpone the flu deaths; they apparently led to lower total mortality.

When applied to current world population, the overall death rate of 2.0 per cent from the Great Influenza Pandemic implies a staggering 150 million deaths. For the United States, the lower death rate of 0.5 per cent corresponds today to 1.7 million US fa-

talities (compared to the 5,50,000 deaths that occurred from 1918 to 1920).

Our study of the Great Influenza Pandemic emphasised death rates out of the whole population. The mortality rate out of the infected population is harder to assess. A frequently repeated estimate is that the pandemic eventually infected one-third of the world's population, implying that the mortality rate out of those infected would have averaged 6 per cent. However, because this one-third number turns out to be based on little supporting data, we concluded that the death rate among those infected is not known with much accuracy.

The Great Influenza Pandemic killed a number of famous people, including the sociologist Max Weber, the artist Gustav Klimt, the child saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto, and Frederick Trump, the grandfather of the current US President. Many more famous people were survivors, including the US President Woodrow Wilson, whose impairment likely had a major adverse impact on the negotiations of the Versailles Treaty in 1919. Thus, if the harsh terms imposed on Germany by this treaty led eventually to World War II, then the pandemic may have indirectly caused World War II.

We studied the impact of influenza deaths from 1918 to 1920 on macroeconomic outcomes. This assessment was challenging because of the overlap in 1918 between the final year of World War I and the peak year of the pandemic. To isolate effects from flu deaths, we held constant the intensity of war that each country faced, gauged by military combat deaths.

Within this framework, we estimated that a rise by one percentage point in the flu death rate led to a decline by 3 per cent in real per capita GDP and by 4 per cent in real per capita consumption. Therefore, the overall flu death rate of 2 per cent corresponds to a fall in the typical country by 6 and 8 per cent, respectively, in GDP and consumption. These results supported some previous findings that — after World War II, the Great Depression, and World War I — the Great Influenza Pandemic was the next most seri-

ously adverse global macroeconomic event since at least 1870.

From the perspective of financial markets, we found that higher flu death rates led to reduced real rates of return on stocks and on short-term government bills, as well as to higher inflation rates. The overall flu death rate of 2.0 per cent corresponds to an estimated decline in real returns by 26 percentage points on stocks and 14 percentage points on bills. However, at the US flu death rate of 0.5 per cent, these effects would be reduced to 7 and 4 points, respectively.

The implications of our study for the ongoing coronavirus pandemic are unsettling. As noted, the potential exists for unprecedented numbers of deaths. There is also the chance for major global economic decline, some of which is already being seen. On the bright side, these outcomes are only possibilities, corresponding to plausible worst-case scenarios. There is no doubt, however, that the potential losses in lives and economic activity justify large outlays — if useful — to limit the damage.

Unfortunately, there is incoherence in the US policies currently being followed. Some actions seek to mitigate the disease's effects effectively by lowering real GDP; for example, by closing businesses, curtailing work, and cancelling travel, meetings, and major events. Though costly economically, one can understand the logic in these policies. In contrast, other policies — such as the Federal Reserve's drastic cuts in interest rates and Congressional proposals to send out checks to everyone — seem to be ways to raise GDP by stimulating aggregate demand. Thus, these interventions run counter to the main thrust of fighting the spread of the coronavirus by curtailing economic activity.

Government involvement would more usefully focus on expansions of medical facilities, personnel, and supplies; funding efforts to develop new medical treatments; and so on.

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Robert Barro is a professor of economics at Harvard University and a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute



AMRITA SEKHAR

ON MARCH 24, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a 21-day national lockdown. "The opinion of experts," he argued, had proven that "there is only one way to effectively deal with coronavirus," which is to enforce social distancing. It is imperative to appreciate why this lockdown was deemed necessary from a health systems perspective.

Initially, the cases detected in India were those that had a direct history of travel to countries where COVID-19 was spreading (stage 1). Over time, cases started to be detected in people who had direct contacts with those with a travel history (local transmission or stage 2). Over the last week, multiple reports suggest that a proportion of people infected with COVID-19 do not show any symptoms (or asymptomatic) but are infectious.

These people would not have been detected when they entered India and could have initiated the spread of the disease in the community, also known as community transmission (stage 3). That India has entered stage 3 is without doubt, based on patterns seen in other parts of the world. This has also been reconfirmed by the Indian Council of Medical Research that has alluded to limited community transmission in the country. Yet, overall testing numbers continue to be very low. As of March 31, India had conducted only 42,788 tests, an abysmally low testing rate of about 32 per million people.

The lockdown is essential to slow the transmission cycle, especially in the absence of vaccines and therapeutics to fight the dis-

WHY THE LOCKDOWN

Disease trends and data that emerges at its end will shape future policy decisions

ease. If implemented and followed rigorously, this will help us "flatten the curve" and provide our health systems with precious time to prepare. The quarantine will ensure asymptomatic people are less likely to spread the infection. It will let us increase the capacity for testing to ensure diagnosis and case management of symptomatic cases. We can put in place aggressive contact tracing and ways of protecting the elderly and other high-risk groups from the infection. For a country with a weak health system, these measures are timely and needed.

While the lockdown is expected to slow transmission and not overburden our health systems, it will not end the spread of the disease. Flattening the curve will slow down the rate at which new infections develop. We will need to invest in developing community testing strategies to assess the spread of both symptomatic and asymptomatic cases.

The 21-day period will also allow us to more clearly analyse data, get a better idea of our numbers and their breakdown by severity. According to data from China, 80 per cent of the people infected with the disease experience relatively mild illness, 14 per cent experience severe disease and approximately 5 per cent are critically ill. The severity of the disease is associated with age and the presence of underlying other conditions. We need to know what these numbers look like for India. These three weeks are also an opportunity for India to make available and plan for hospital beds, ventilators, testing kits and reagents, per-

APRIL 2, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

RAJ NARAIN EXPELLED THE LOK DAL president, Charan Singh, expelled Raj Narain from the primary membership of the party for six years. In retaliation, Narain, who is the vice-president of the party, dissolved the Lok Dal since, he said, such a course "has become a historic necessity." Charan Singh's decision came a few hours after receiving Narain's letter requesting a week's time to send a reply to the charge-sheet served on him on Sunday. The action has been taken against the party vice president for his anti-party activities, for carrying on a false propaganda against the party president and for damaging the image of the party.

ASSAM CUT-OFF THE CENTRE AND the Assam student agitators appeared to be moving towards a solution to the "foreigners issue" following the governor, LP Singh's reported offer of 1967 as the "cut-off year" instead of 1971. The All-Assam Students Union (AASU) president, Prafulla Mahanta, quoted the governor as having offered to adopt 1967 as the "cut-off" year to decide citizenship. The students union had suggested to New Delhi in a letter on March 25 that it was willing to adopt 1961 instead of 1951 as the base year for the purpose of detecting "foreign nationals" in the state and deleting their names from the voters' lists, Mahanta described.

NO SONS OF SOIL PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi said that the "sons of the soil" theory was pernicious and it narrowed down "opportunity of elevation to higher posts and deprives the region of greater and more varied talent". Mrs Gandhi was addressing the 57th annual convocation of Delhi University. The Vice-President, M Hidayatullah, who is also chancellor of the university, presided over the function. The prime minister said that it would be "our earnest endeavour to provide the people jobs near home because not many people could migrate to other parts of the country for work". But the "sons of the soil" theory was no answer for this, she added.



9 THE IDEAS PAGE

Pull out all the stops

Scope and size of policy support to address coronavirus crisis need to be determined by extent of economic damage, not perceived limits about what India can afford



JAHANGIR AZIZ

SINCE LAST WEEK, a sense of coherence is settling over India's response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The national lockdown, the incomes and credit support, and the three-month debt moratorium announced by the government and the RBI are the needed first steps to contain the outbreak on the one hand, and lessen the economic impact on the other hand.

More needs to be done. But how much more? Several laundry lists of measures have already been proffered by many, and it is easy to add one more. However, these are not of much help, given the extreme uncertainty clouding how long and intensely social distancing policies will need to be pursued, the attendant economic impact and, crucially, how quickly and strongly the recovery can take place. The answer to the first depends on how much the outbreak tests the capacity of the already-stretched public health system. If the lockdown does not slow the spread of the virus to a rate that the healthcare system can handle, then the social distancing policies, in some form or another, will need to be extended. The longer such containment measures last, the larger will be the destruction to (of) demand and the bigger the collapse in output and incomes.

Then, there is the question about the pace and strength of the recovery. Much will depend on how much damage the eventual output loss inflicts on households' and corporates' balance sheets. For example, even if a worker starts earning once the lockdown is lifted, if one has incurred large debts in the interim, one's consumption demand will naturally be much lower than before the crisis. The same holds for corporates, both big and small. What makes the situation worse is that there is not likely to be much help coming from global demand. We now expect global growth to decline 10.5 per cent (annualised) in 1H20 (first half 2020), considerably more than during the global financial crisis, and rebound only partially in 2H20, leaving global GDP 2.5 percentage points below its pre-crisis level at the end of this year.

Given these extreme uncertainties, it is very hard to assess the economic damage with any degree of conviction. In fact, in last week's policy review, the Monetary Policy Committee refrained from providing any projections for future growth and inflation, breaking from its normal practice. So, if the outlook is so uncertain, how does one calibrate the policy response? One can easily under-support the economy, which could prolong the slowdown, or over-support the economy, which could end up stoking inflation (as it did in 2010-13, when the massive monetary and fiscal easing during the global financial crisis was not withdrawn quickly) or creating asset price bubbles.

The answer isn't throwing the kitchen sink at the problem, hoping that something might work. The way out is not to even try calibrating policies under such extreme uncertainty, but to let the size of the support be determined endogenously by the extent and nature of the economic damage.

This requires falling back on first principles. We know that the economic damage could be very large. We also know that if the damage to households' and firms' balance



CR Sasikumar

sheets is substantial, then the recovery could be delayed and weakened. This calls for extensive income support through existing government Jan Dhan and Mudra accounts to households and SMEs, and temporary tax cuts or deferrals to the larger corporates. It also needs substantial cuts in indirect taxes (GST) when social distancing is relaxed.

The RBI has begun to provide support via its liquidity facility (TLTRO) and regulatory forbearance that allows banks to offer a debt moratorium to their customers for the next three months. But both these measures work through banks. Given that banks have turned substantially risk-averse because of the restructuring and bad debt problems of the last few years, the RBI likely needs to start providing liquidity directly to corporates, as recently announced by the US Fed. At the same time, any debt moratorium will reduce profit and, in turn, capital, banks might be reluctant to extend it to all their customers. Consequently, the RBI also needs to change regulations to accommodate possible shortfalls in bank capital because of the debt moratorium.

Importantly, the scope and size of such policy support need to be determined by the extent of the economic damage, and not by perceived limits about what India can afford or those imposed by existing institutional arrangements and practices. It is quite possible that the size of the economic damage ends up requiring support that widens the fiscal deficit substantially. India clearly does

The market is on edge, and fears of eventual large government borrowing have spiked long-term interest rates despite large cuts in short-term rates by the RBI, which are likely to delay and weaken the recovery. Any large bond auction by the government, even if it is offset by the RBI through open market operations, is not likely to calm market nerves and bring down lending rates. What is needed is for the government to invoke the 'escape' or the 'natural disaster' clause in the fiscal responsibility act (FRBM) that allows the RBI to directly fund the budget deficit without having to go through market auctions.

not have the fiscal space to provide any material economic support when measured against standard benchmarks of fiscal prudence. But this is an unprecedented shock. It calls for unprecedented responses.

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Such a proposal is likely to raise the hackles of any fiscal conservative and there is the natural question about how rating agencies might react. As long as the government credibly commits to reversing the action as soon as the crisis is over (for example, when GDP has returned to its pre-crisis level or thereabouts), rating agencies and fiscal conservatives alike will likely treat this kindly, as it is a response to a crisis caused not by poor economic policies, but by an act of nature.

The writer is Chief Emerging Markets Economist, JP Morgan. Views expressed are personal

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Cleaners, refuse collectors and food industry workers are playing a vital role in this crisis. They deserve better pay and status." — THE GUARDIAN

Notes in the time of Covid

A strand of nucleic acid in a shell of protein is forcing us to confront myths about ourselves



JERRY PINTO

YOU ARE walking through Shivaji Park, a large blue plastic bag on one shoulder. It is empty, the bag and you must fill it or you will not eat. You must find waste plastic, Bisleri bottles, rubber slippers, old batteries, anything that might be bought by the kilo. But now that the middle-class, the dirt-creating middle-class, has quarantined itself at home, there is nothing for you here. They have stayed away and they have not even left behind the remains of the birthday feast for you to lick some butter cream off the cardboard box. And if indeed you find something to sell, who will buy? It may be time to look into the dustbins for something to eat...

That's when you wake up and realise it was a nightmare. You are at home. You are safe. Your family is asleep around you. Your bedside clock says it is 3:46 am. You can sleep for another three hours before it's time to get up and go to. And then, the other nightmare hits you.

You are not going out tomorrow. You are at home. You are self-isolating, not because you want to but because the hated HR department of your office sent an advisory saying you should work from home.

Now it is for you to decide the shape of your day. Your day was always shaped by the form and nature of your work. You gulped your breakfast because you might miss the bus or get stuck in traffic. The mornings were driven, racked, but only until you reached the office. Then you punched in and settled down to the rhythms of the work day. These are familiar rhythms, the usual politics, the coffee-breaks, the water-cooler gossip, the email that had to be sent, the circular that had to be read, the meeting for which you had to brief someone. All this fed into the myth all of us, who are not on the frontlines of the Covid battle, must maintain inside our heads: The Myth of Personal Indispensability. As we send off another carefully worded email in which willingness to do is combined with inability to commit, we think, "Who else could do this job?" or even "Who else would do this job?" As we sit through another numbing meeting and manage to suggest that the task allotted to us actually belongs to the department down the corridor whose idiot representative is not present, we think, "Really, what would they do without me?"

We were never as important, we office workers, as doctors or teachers. We often say it: "It's not rocket science." But, truly, most of our jobs are simply redundant to the world. This moment, this self-isolating moment is forcing us to recognise how much it takes to keep our redundancy hidden. Today, we're not as important as the men who carry bags of vegetables on their backs. Because if they don't show up to work and they don't do their job, how will you get your *aaloo baingan*? Today, we're not as important as the municipality workers because if they don't show up to work, any amount of getting Raju to wipe the floors again is not going to work. This virion is saying to you and to me, "I know what your embossed visiting card says. I know how hard you fought to get there. But you're still supernumerary in this war. You're going to be at your best if you sit at home and do as little as possible."

How does that feel?

It drives most men out of their houses. From my balcony, I see a cross-section of the world and most of the people who broke the janata curfew were men. I think this has something to do with the feeling that you are only doing something if you are out in the world. At home, you are doing nothing. Today I watched the street for an hour. Seven women passed by, almost all carrying vegetables or milk. Eight-five men passed by, only eight had shopping bags. The rest had cellphones. Many simply emerged from their buildings to stand and watch; they were often joined by other men and, together, they would simply stand with their hands behind their backs, pontificating.

A strand of nucleic acid in a shell of protein is forcing us to confront another myth: The Myth of the Indian Family. It goes without saying that we love our families. And we do. But our love is as fractured as the love of any other nation's; it is as exhausted love. It is not a given, it is to be worked at. Now that we must all stay at home with ourselves and with each other, we are asked again and again: How can I love these people when they take up so much space and time and effort? And suddenly, the bounds of the home become too small, and the corridor, surely that's not breaking curfew? Or the courtyard of the building? Or even the street outside? Not going too far. Just away from you. Just away from this myth of love.

Not to go all Sufi on you, but you won't run very far from yourself. And confronting the self, the self-as-it-is, not the imagined self in a nightmare, not the inadequate self of a dystopian future that suddenly doesn't seem so improbable, that may be the only task we have.

And not just in the time of Covid.

Pinto is a Mumbai-based writer

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EASE MISERY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Parts of a whole' (IE, April 1). Economic activity, which has come to a grinding halt in the wake of imposition of 21-day nationwide lockdown, needs to accelerate. No doubt, this has caused abject misery among workers, especially those in the unorganised sector. Restoration of business activities in large industries seems impossible at this juncture. Local units can be allowed to operate with certain relaxations to alleviate the hurdles faced by the agriculture sector and the general public.

SS Paul, Nadia

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.

RECOGNISE LABOUR

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Viruses in social context', (IE, April 1). The inflow of economic migrants keeps the wheels of the economy turning. Despite their invaluable contribution to their host city, migrants are often disenfranchised on the basis of domicile qualification, they are treated as mere guests and their interests never figure in the priority lists of the local politics of the region. It is high time that we acknowledge that the migrant population is an indispensable part of the local economy of any big city

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Viruses in social context', (IE, April 1). The village has become the grist mill that provides the city with workers, and gets only misery in return — a lack of infrastructure, jobs and diminishing returns from agriculture bear testimony to this. The answer might lie in how Mahatma Gandhi imagined the economy. An exploitative model will only cause further misery.

Bishwadeep Chatterjee, Delhi

MENTAL STRESS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Coronavirus anxiety', (IE, March 31). The editorial

was correct in pointing out the consequences of the COVID-19 lockdown on those suffering with mental health issues. But it missed the mental health issues of labour migrants. The media has mainly discussed the issue of the hunger and shelter of migrant labours stranded in cities. But they are also experiencing immense mental stress as they are worried about their old parents and families living miles away. They are also anxious about their future as their life depends on a daily wage

Suchak D Patel, Ahmedabad

TRACE THE VIRUS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Stepping up the fight' (IE, April 1). In a major development, a COVID-19 cluster has been discovered in the heart of Delhi, at an event in Nizamuddin. Now, at least 24 people who attended the event have tested positive. The focus has now rightly shifted to contact tracing from the gathering, with authorities trying to home in on all the people who had attended the Delhi event. It is imperative that all of them are traced and quarantined forthwith.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

Difficult times, tough measures

PM Modi has shown willingness, ability to take hard decisions in coronavirus crisis



SYED ZAFAR ISLAM

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi's apology during his "Mann Ki Baat" address on Sunday has come from the heart. He was pained to see the helplessness of the hundreds of thousands of migrant workers gathered at the Delhi-UP border, hoping to go home despite the clear advisory by the Centre to stay put wherever they were. The apology should be put in context. When he took the difficult decision on the three-week-long lockdown, PM Modi hoped his action would be supported by state governments and the country's bureaucrats. But it seems they — particularly the Delhi government — failed to discharge their responsibilities efficiently. But instead of pointing fingers, the PM magnanimously apologised to the people, who he values the most.

A global crisis, such as the one posed by the coronavirus, comes rarely in one's lifetime. It has brought many developed countries to their knees. Nations seem to be caught between the devil and the deep blue sea — whether to take unpleasant steps to contain the spread of the virus at a considerable economic cost or face the tsunami of incalculable death and destruction by hesitating to take unpopular steps.

The situation was one of the biggest challenges of PM Modi's long political career. A nationwide lockdown, never imposed in India's history, was an option extensively de-

bated among his colleagues. Sources suggest that many expressed apprehensions about it, saying it was uncharted territory, a step which would bring untold miseries to the poor and cause lasting damage to the economy. Experts and advisors preferred a partial lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19. PM Modi must have agonised over it but he went for broke, like he has, successfully, on several occasions in the past. He disregarded vote bank politics and put the interest of the nation first. This is in sharp contrast to US President Donald Trump who kept worrying about being re-elected if the economy tanked.

Modi's decision appeared to be well thought out, contrary to what his critics think. If the coronavirus spreads to thickly populated localities, our healthcare system will be overwhelmed and perhaps broken. The fundamentals of our economy, in contrast, are strong and the financial costs of a complete lockdown, though considerable, will not cripple the economy.

The decision on the lockdown must have been an exceptionally difficult one for PM Modi. It may have been prompted by the open violations of the janata curfew by a lot of misguided citizens. But he may have also seen that the majority appeared receptive to the idea of a country-wide lockdown. Indeed,

by the evening of March 22, PM Modi had suggested that lockdowns over a longer period were a possibility. The janata curfew proved a dress-rehearsal for the 21-day lockdown. It was also an initiative to sensitise the people and educate them about the dangers posed by the deadly virus. It was about introducing the concept of social distancing in a country where people live cheek by jowl and where the concept is alien to them

Staunch political adversaries, such as Rahul Gandhi and the Congress President Sonia Gandhi, have described the lockdown as a step in the right direction. It was welcomed by many other leaders at the Centre as well as in the states. Globally too it has been praised. The US and UK media have given it wide coverage. The decision has received a huge thumbs up from the Indian people, which include his critics, including critics in the media.

The tough decision was backed by priority-based announcements. First, a Rs 15,000-crore stimulus to strengthen the country's fragile healthcare infrastructure. This was followed up by the government's decision to provide flexibility to meet the statutory deadlines and also open the treasury to the poor and needy. The RBI has made a series of decisions to give a fillip to markets and corporates. There will be more help coming in

the following days and weeks.

The first week of the lockdown is over. People are staying indoors. The problems of the small farmers and migrant workers have drawn the media's attention. The government had envisaged these problems. The Rs 1.7 lakh crore financial stimulus will take care of these communities, though it might take a few days for the cash to be deposited in their bank accounts.

The movement of migrant workers does present a grave problem. The state governments need to step up their efforts to help them with food and lodging. Home Minister Amit Shah has urged the states to ensure that the needs of these workers are met. Several state governments, such as Telangana, Punjab and Haryana, have risen to the occasion but other states need to scale up their efforts to help the poor and needy

Come May and we will see Modi's decision for the nationwide lockdown being vindicated. We will continue to have a relatively low number of coronavirus cases — a situation which will easily be handled by our frontline warriors. The PM will need the support of the people and state governments to make this happen.

The writer is a national spokesperson of BJP. Views expressed are personal

U.P.R.V.U.N.L. TENDER NOTICE... HARDUANGANJ THERMAL POWER STATION SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE CIRCLE-I, D'TPS, HTPS, KASIMPUR Short Term E-Tender Notice (Time Extension) E-Tender No. T-21/AHD/D'TPS/HTPS/2019-20...

IRCON INTERNATIONAL LTD (A Govt of India Undertaking) e-Procurement Notice... Estimated cost of work (services) Rs. 20,19,056/-

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE... No. S/2019/16 Date: 01.04.2020... TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE No.1 /DATED : 26.03.2020

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD... OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, TWAD BOARD, MADURAI... TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE No.1 /DATED : 26.03.2020

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT... EXTENSION NOTIFICATION DATE: 01.04.2020... Tamil Nadu Urban Health Care Project (Supported by JICA)

US citizens may fly back from April 4... New Delhi: US citizens stranded in India due to the lockdown in the country will be repatriated in flights that are likely to begin from April 4, the American Embassy here said on Wednesday.

SEARCH FOR MISSING... KHUSHBOO... General public is hereby informed that a girl (depicted in the photo), Named: Khushboo D/o Sh. Ram Sewak R/o Ahluwalia Company, Mansa Devi Mandir, Pkt-13, Narela, Delhi has been missing since 18.02.2020.

G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment (NIHE) TENDER DATE EXTENSION NOTICE... No. GBPNiHE/ISRO-GBP Project/2019-20/25... E-tenders are invited on behalf of the Director, GBPNiHE, Kosi-Katarmal, Almora...

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT... EXTENSION NOTIFICATION No. 19SE/BCMC (MW)/MDU/2019-2020... Last date for submission of Pre-Qualification application mentioned in the NIT No. 19SE/BCMC (MW)/MDU/2019-2020/Dt. 17.03.2020.

Uttar Pradesh Basti youth, 72-yr-old kin of Meerut patient succumb to COVID-19... UTTAR PRADESH recorded its first coronavirus-related fatalities on Wednesday with two deaths — a 25-year-old man in Basti and a 72-year-old man in Meerut.

AVANEESH MISHRA & AMIT SHARMA... LUCKNOW, MEERUT, APRIL 1... UTTAR PRADESH recorded its first coronavirus-related fatalities on Wednesday with two deaths — a 25-year-old man in Basti and a 72-year-old man in Meerut.

In Hyderabad, corona patient attacks docs after brother succumbs... RELATIVES OF a COVID-19 patient who died on Wednesday evening attacked doctors at Gandhi Hospital in Secunderabad alleging lack of proper care.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD, APRIL 1... RELATIVES OF a COVID-19 patient who died on Wednesday evening attacked doctors at Gandhi Hospital in Secunderabad alleging lack of proper care. Two brothers who had tested positive were admitted at the hospital, the main centre for treating coronavirus patients in the state, and one of them, a 56-year-old with pre-existing medical conditions, died on Wednesday.

राजस्थान आवासन मण्डल... निविदा सूचना संख्या - 23/2019-20... राजस्थान आवासन मण्डल की प्रताप नगर योजना जयपुर के सैक्टर-16 स्थित कोचिंग हब की चारदीवारी व डबल्यू. वी. एम. सड़क के निर्माण कार्य की बिड के लिए उम्मीदवारों को राजस्थान आवासन मण्डल में एवं अन्य विभागों में 'एच' श्रेणी के पंजीकृत संवेदकों से निर्धारित प्रपत्र में ऑनलाईन ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट प्रक्रिया से बिड आमंत्रित की जाती है।

ANDHRA PRADESH POWER GENERATION CORPORATION LIMITED VIDYUTH SOUDHA :: VIJAYAWADA TENDER NOTICE... NIT.No.E-61000635 / HPC & HPI/RLA STUDY/APGENCO/2020-21... APGENCO invites tenders for the work of "Residual Life Assessment (RLA) and Life Extension (LE) studies on civil Structures, Penstocks, Hydro Mechanical and Electrical & Mechanical equipment of all six units (13X17 MW + 3X23 MW) of Machkund Hydro Electric (Joint) Scheme" through A.P e-Procurement platform.

TIRUMANGALAM MUNICIPALITY... Due to the lockdown imposed because of COVID-19 the following corrigendum is issued in continuation of Tender ROC No:223/2020/E1, Dated: 29.01.2020 for Notice inviting request for qualification (RFQ) for construction of New Bus Stand in Tirumangalam Municipality on Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) Basis request for Qualification.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT... Invitation For Pre-Qualification... International Competitive Bidding with PQ (ICB) on behalf of Tamil Nadu Urban Health Care Project (Supported by JICA).

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH SAMAGRA SHIKSHA, STATE PROJECT OFFICE, KBC BOYS HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS, OPP RAITHU BAZAR, PATAMATA, VIJAYAWADA, ANDHRA PRADESH... e-procurement notice No. SSA-16021/4/2019-MIS-SEC-SSA, dt. 01.04.2020

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT OF NCT OF DELHI EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (NORTH EAST)-I... 2142, JANTA FLATS G.T.B. ENCLAVE DELHI-110093... PRESS NIT No-123 (2019-20)

CHIEF ENGINEER (SHIMLA ZONE) HPPWD, NIRMAN BHAWAN, NIGAM VIHAR, SHIMLA, H.P.-171002 UNDER PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY) e-Procurement Notice... The Government of India has received a Loan/Credit Number "BRD-88640" under PMGSY-II (Rural Road Project-II) under World Bank Funding (Additional Financing & Green & Climate Resilience) Rural Roads Financing towards the cost of Rural Roads Project (Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-II) and intends to apply a part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the contracts for construction of RRP-II works.

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Name of Distt., Package No., Name of work, Period of Const. in Days, Estimated Cost (Const. Part Rs., Maint. Part Rs.), Total Cost, Bid Security, Cost of Form. Includes details for Shimla and Kinnaur projects.

verka THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD. SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022. EPABX NO. 0172-5041812-13... Notice Inviting e-Tender

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS RAILWAY RECRUITMENT BOARD, AJMER... Corrigendum No. 2 E Tender No. RRB-All-Tender-CEN-03-2019... Name of Work: RRBs - Engaging Exam Conducting Agency (ECA) to conduct Computer Based Tests (CBTs) and all related activities like processing of Results and Panels etc for Recruitment of various Ministerial and Isolated categories in Indian Railways notified in Centralized Employment Notification (CEN) 03/2019.

OFFICE OF THE EXCISE COMMISSIONER CHHATTISGARH Re-TENDER NOTICE (CORRIGENDUM) No./EX./Distillery/2020/ 1564 Raipur, Dated 31 March, 2020. In reference to the Re-Tender Notice No./Ex./Distillery/2020/1541, Raipur, Dated 27 March, 2020 of the office of The Excise Commissioner, Chhattisgarh:- In the point number "4" the date of receiving and opening of tender to be read as 1.00 p.m. and 2.00 p.m. simultaneously, on "03.04.2020."

Jaishankar tells Pompeo to extend visas of stranded Indians... EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister S Jaishankar has asked US Secretary of State Michael R Pompeo to extend visas of Indian students and skilled professionals stranded in the US following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jaishankar and Pompeo spoke on the phone on Tuesday evening and also discussed ways to coordinate efforts to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. The visas of many Indian students at US universities are due to expire in the coming weeks. Sources said that many skilled Indian professionals working in the US on H-1B visas also face a similar situation.

Pompeo and Jaishankar also talked about greater cooperation between the US, India and other close partners to strengthen global pharmaceutical and healthcare manufacturing and supply chains to tackle the COVID-19 crisis. "He (Pompeo) also reiterated the United States' unwavering commitment to work with India to advance peace, prosperity, and security in the Indo-Pacific and around the globe," according to US Department of State spokesperson Morgan Ortugas. They also discussed the situation in Afghanistan, and the US Secretary of State expressed his condolences to Jaishankar on the attack on a gurdwara in Kabul.

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE... (1) Tender No.: MKN /Const./JFL-DNA/T-419150415 (2) Name of the work with its location : Construction of 224 nos. of Type-II quarters, 110 no. of Type-III quarters & 18 nos. of Type-IV quarters including pathways and service/link road, Officer Rest House at Kudamangi City, Sub-ordinate Rest House, Supervisors cum AGEN office, Track Machine Rest House, RCC Overhead Tank and other ancillary works at various stations between Phulera to Degana in connection with Phulera - Degana doubling. (3) Tender closing date and time : 08.05.2020 at 15:00 hrs. The NIT for the above mentioned e-tender was having tender closing date & time as 07.04.2020 upto 15:00 hrs. Now, the said e-tender has tender closing date & time as 08.05.2020 at 15:00 hrs. Other particulars of this e-tender shall remain same as per original NIT. Dy. Chief Engineer (Construction)-I, North Western Railway, Makrana 336/DK/20

AN EXPERT EXPLAINS

'We are lucky cases have not skyrocketed, but I don't think we should sit back'

DR RANDEEP GULERIA, AIIMS Director and India's top pulmonologist, is a member of the high-level technical committee to guide strategies for COVID-19 prevention and control. He also heads a team that runs the National Teleconsultation Centre, connecting doctors across the country in real time for treatment of COVID-19 patients. He spoke to KAUNAIN SHERIFF M

Since March 12 when India effectively closed its borders and WHO termed COVID-19 a pandemic, what has surprised you so far? And what hasn't.

Globally, what surprised me is how some countries took the pandemic lightly—in terms of lockdown, stopping international travel, how they thought that for some reason they were immune, that the virus would not travel there. These countries had time to be more active, once they realised what was happening in China. (At home), what surprised me was the response to the Prime Minister's appeal for jana curfew; what disappointed me was how, despite understanding the importance of the curfew, some groups did not follow it. It is a citizens' movement and if we have to win the battle against COVID-19, it has to be won at a community level rather than at the hospital level. Hospitals will look after sick patients; it is community involvement that will actually stop the pandemic.

Just over 1,800 positive cases and over 40 deaths. Many ask, have we not tested enough? Are we under-reporting positive cases and deaths?

Let's look at the aim of testing. A lot of people argue that we need to keep testing. But there should be some reason behind it. The initial question was to see: are there cases coming from outside? And that's why there was quarantine and testing that was being done of those with travel history or contact history.

In the current scenario, with the lockdown, the aim is to see if we can prevent the spread and to identify those areas where there are large number of cases. Testing has to go hand in hand while answering these questions. Also, you must remember that in our country we have very good surveillance data, which is the IDSP data, which is looking from a PHC level or ASHA worker level and upwards. It is mapping anyone who has flu-like symptoms or any individual who is admitted with severe respiratory illness. This gives us a rough idea, in any area, if there is a cluster developing.

Testing everyone will need the use of a lot of resources and will not give us any concrete data. Testing the population that needs to be tested and which will help policymakers to make a decision is important.

As things progress, testing strategy will also change. What we need to answer through testing is: which hotspots are developing; is there a significant community spread that is taking place, so that decisions can be made about more aggressive containment strategies and to upscale health resources in these clusters. The aim is to see that if we do have increasing number of cases, they are localised to one area, and then it will be easier for us to manage—rather than having pockets all over the country.

Suppose a patient is terminally ill with cancer and tests positive for COVID-19 and succumbs. Is that a COVID-19 death?

A COVID-19 death is one when a patient dies of COVID-related complications. You should understand 80% of the people will have COVID-19 and will recover as mild illness. If a terminally ill patient has tested positive and has COVID-19-caused pneumonia and sepsis and that leads to death, that will be a COVID-19-related death. If COVID-19 does not cause any respiratory problem, it is not a COVID-19 death.

Everyone is talking about community transmission as the most dangerous part. How should we understand this?

Ultimately, to some extent, community

transmission will occur in all pandemics. Even if we are able to prevent community transmission today, at some point in time, you will open up travel. At that time, there will be some people who will come with an infection and carry it forward.

It is not a question whether we can forever prevent community transmission. What we are looking at is: can we, in the beginning, prevent widespread community transmission at one point in time so that we don't have a steep rise in the number of cases but we flatten the curve. (This helps us) stretch the period by which we will have a lower number of cases and health resources are not put under pressure, and we get more time for better treatment strategies.

But to say that we will never have community transmission will not be a correct statement. There will be some community transmission. As of now, the aim is that even if there is some degree of community spread, we contain it and localise it to a certain area and focus our resources in terms of providing good healthcare and not allowing it to spread to other areas.

Almost 10 days into the lockdown, and keeping in mind the economic cost of such a massive lockdown, people are asking questions whether such a blunt instrument was needed especially when the mortality rate is low and especially when India is such a young country...

I do agree that we have the advantage that the average age of our population is much younger compared to Italy's. The mortality is much higher in older age groups.

If you look at decade-wide stratification, it is much higher in the age group of 80s compared to those in their 70s. However, we must understand that India has a large population and even if we have cases that are not severe, still we will have a significant number who would need hospitalisation.

Also, we have one more thing to keep in mind, although we are a young population, many of us have co-morbidities. India is the diabetic capital of the world. (The segment of) our population that has heart disease gets it 10 years earlier than those in the West. Therefore, the strategy for having a lockdown is essential so that we are able to contain widespread infection and we get time to improve our health resources.

In my mind, the economic cost of having a huge outbreak is much more in terms of both the cost and the mortality than what we will lose during the lockdown in economic terms. That is why the lockdown makes sense, even though it is causing a lot of strain on the country's economy.

As the head of AIIMS, the country's premier health institution, what are the metrics that you are looking at?

What we are looking at is: containment, containment, containment. We have to contain it in localised areas rather than have a widespread infection across the country. We have to upscale our health facilities. It is a time when the public sector and private sector need to come together. There are areas where the public sector may not have as good facilities in terms of ICU care and ventilatory support, for example. And the private sector might be in a much better position to save lives in terms of ventilatory support. It is important that we collate our health resources and work as a team to save lives.

What should be the government's next step in the public policy intervention, especially when cases in India are not growing exponentially, as compared to countries in the west?

My issue is to start quickly looking at data. There are two or three questions there. One, how long should the lockdown continue?



As of now, the aim is that even if there is some degree of community spread, we contain it and localise it to a certain area and focus our resources in terms of providing good healthcare and not allowing it to spread to other areas"

Two, should it be throughout the country or, three, (should) there be a graded lifting of the lockdown in certain areas?

That is dependent on the data that emerges, in terms of the number of cases, hotspots, and areas in our country which are safe, are protected because of the lockdown, and don't have a significant number of cases. That data is important so that we can take a call on (these questions).

We are lucky that the number of cases has not skyrocketed. But, at the same time, I don't think we should sit back. We have to be very aggressive in trying to maintain this by containing the spread in a geographical area rather than allowing it to spread. We need active case finding and maybe more testing in these areas.

The third aspect is consolidating our health sector resources so that we can provide optimum care, and that means respiratory care or critical care.

In the pandemic, what is the definition of 'we have the infection under control'? In the US, experts say that's when the curve of new cases begins to fall. In a country of 1 billion plus, what is the indicator?

This is a difficult question. A lot of people are doing mathematical modelling on this. I think it will be difficult to draw a whole curve for a nation. We will have to do it region-wise. And that is why lockdown becomes more important.

What are the unique challenges of fighting this pandemic? There are reports of a shortage of PPE (personal protective equipment) and ventilators.

This is, in many ways, a unique pandemic. The most worrisome is a pandemic that causes pneumonia and respiratory failure.

Because your requirement of protection and treatment is at a very high end.

If you have a pandemic, where an agent is waterborne, you can control it in an easier manner. But most pandemics are because of droplet infections that spread very rapidly. Often, they are milder like H1N1. Here, we don't know what is the mortality as we don't know the denominator.

But this is spreading very quickly and in high-risk patients, it is causing significant mortality. Therefore, for any hospital, the challenge is how to upscale its infrastructure for critical care. Like how do we get more ventilators or how do we free existing ones; how do we protect our healthcare workers and for that we need a large amount of PPE.

More important is how do we allay the fear of healthcare workers. Many are scared about themselves, their families, and about taking the infection home. And that is something we need to work on. We need to work on developing an environment where they feel that everything is being done to protect them when they are looking after these patients.

We have adequate and reassuring stocks of PPE. We also need to develop strategies for ventilators. Also, there is a need to see how we can prevent the spread to other areas. There has to be a dedicated hospital or a building. In Italy, we saw common wards, with COVID and non-COVID areas—where the spread of infection was high. It has been isolated as a stand-alone facility. Because (then) you are able to conserve your resources in that area, PPE requirement comes down and infection rate is low. That strategy has to be developed.

Another very important thing is to have manpower that is trained in infection control and trained in managing critically ill patients. These patients require intensive management; where lungs are stiff, they need a

lot of adjustment in ventilatory strategies. They need drugs to control blood pressure. Some go into kidney failure and need dialysis. For that, you need people who are trained.

We also need to look at strategies, if we can do this through telemedicine. There are centres which run critical care through telemedicine. We need to consider if a specialist can look at two or three ICUs through telemedicine and keep advising the treating team. AIIMS had already set up a connect centre and doctors from anywhere in the country can talk to us about critical-care management.

What do we know so far about the Indian strain of the virus?

Research is still going on. There is a lot of speculation if the strain in India is less virulent. I am not sure if we have that data. There is a lot of research going on a vaccine, as we have isolated the virus. A lot of studies are going on to look at novel therapies based on different drugs, looking at various models.

There are all kinds of charts, studies and projections doing the rounds. How do you deal with such numbers in India?

A lot of data that is being generated is based on modelling. Everyone can do that by putting it into an algorithm. A lot of modelling data takes into account a lot of factors and variables which we are not very sure of. They could vary due to what happens due to the lockdown. There are many unknowns: the lockdown, rise in temperature, how the virus has mutated. I personally feel we should look at how the graph is trending and then be able to give some idea, rather than relying on modelling.

The ICMR has recommended hydroxychloroquine for health workers. US President Trump had spoken of azithromycin with hydroxychloroquine. What is the evidence?

The US FDA (Food and Drug Administration) has approved through emergency approval the use of these two drugs for sick patients. We recommended these many days ago. We have looked at the data, both the laboratory data and some data from France and China. Based on looking at the mechanics of the drug, the safety profile of the drug, we found it to be safe. Keeping that in mind, we did a risk-benefit analysis and came to the conclusion that there could be benefit and little risk, if healthy people like healthcare persons, under close monitoring, do take it. Both of these are still on low-quality evidence and as we go ahead, more evidence will be available.

There are reports that higher temperature can reduce the virulence.

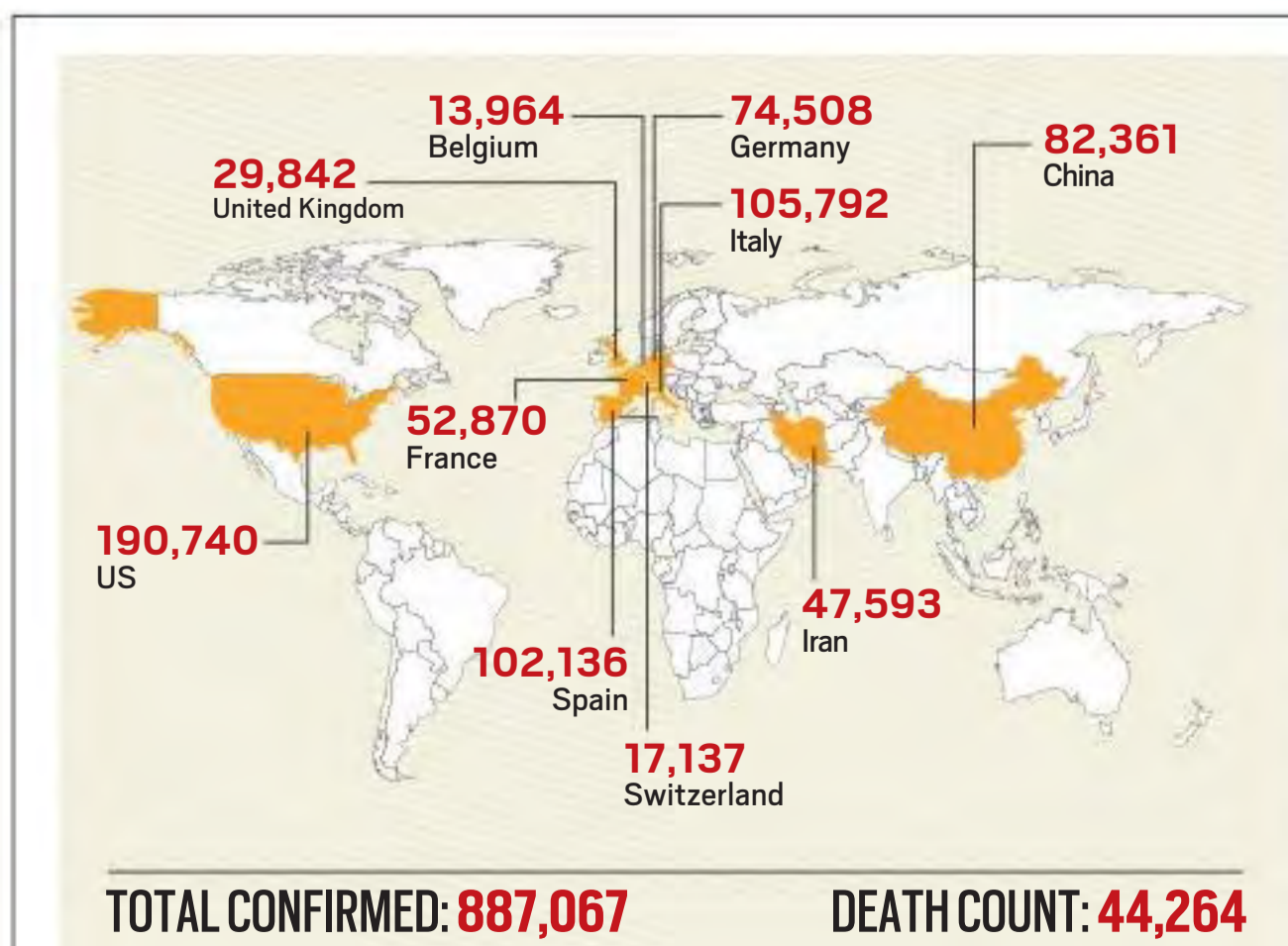
The temperature theory is basically that as temperature goes up, the virus will not survive for a very long period of time. The virus probably will not survive for a long duration in an outdoor environment, if the temperature is above 40°C. But having said that, one must remember two things: we are still having outbreaks in Singapore and other areas which are tropical; second, a lot of us spend time indoors where the temperature is air-conditioned. And if we have a cough and cold there, the virus can stay viable in that environment for a long period of time.

This could be in a shopping mall or an office. Therefore, the infection could still be transmitted. So summer may help in preventing the transmission outside but, possibly, not indoors.

The virus probably will not survive for a long duration in an outdoor environment, if the temperature is above 40°C. But having said that, one must remember... we are still having outbreaks in (tropical) areas; second, a lot of us spend time indoors where the temperature is air-conditioned"

A lot of people argue that we need to keep testing. But there has to be a reason... Testing everyone will need a lot of resources and will not give us any concrete data. Testing the population that needs to be tested and which will help policymakers to make a decision is important"

rather than having pockets all over the country.



CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED DAILY Are children less vulnerable? IN RESEARCH about the novel coronavirus so far, the evidence has been that the elderly and those with underlying conditions are more vulnerable. Does that mean children are immune? The answer is no; although children have been less severely affected, the picture about COVID-19 is still emerging. The World Health Organization notes: "Older people, and people with chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, appear to be more at risk of developing severe symptoms. As this is a new virus, we are still learning about how it af-

INDIA COUNT: 1,834 (41 DEATHS) REST OF INDIA: Andaman and Nicobar Islands 10, Assam 1, Bihar 23, Chandigarh 16, Chhattisgarh 9, Goa 5, Haryana 43, Himachal Pradesh 3, Jharkhand 1, Ladakh 13, Manipur 1, Mizoram 1, Odisha 4, Puducherry 3, Punjab 42, Uttarakhand 7, West Bengal 37. TOP 10 STATES: Rajasthan 93, Gujarat 82, Maharashtra 302, Karnataka 101, Delhi 152, UP 103, Telangana 96, Andhra Pradesh 83, Tamil Nadu 234, Kerala 241. Union Health Ministry update at 11 pm, April 1. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states with most cases are listed above. 124 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 15 STATES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

12 THE OUTBREAK THE WORLD

PANDEMIC WATCH



Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

SRI LANKA President calls for financial support

Colombo: Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa is requesting that international financial organisations provide debt moratorium or debt deferment facilities to developing nations such as Sri Lanka, which are adversely affected due to the new coronavirus.

Rajapaksa made the request on Wednesday during a telephone discussion with WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Sri Lanka has imposed a curfew since March 20, locking down the whole country and banning nonessential travel.

Two people have so far died due to COVID-19 while there are 142 positive cases. **AP**

IRAN Floods leave 21 dead

Tehran: Flooding in Iran caused by heavy rainfall has left 21 people dead and one missing, an emergency services spokesman said Wednesday.

Mojtaba Khaledi told Iran's ISNA news agency that 22 people had also been injured, with most of the casualties in southern or central provinces.

He said 11 people had died in Fars province, three each in Hormozgan and Qom, two in Sistan and Baluchistan province, and one each in Bushehr and Khuzestan. **AFP**

AFGHANISTAN Govt, Taliban discuss prisoner swap

Kabul: Afghan government representatives have met with the Taliban in Kabul for the first time to discuss a prisoner swap aimed at jump-starting a peace process, officials said Wednesday.

The two sides met Tuesday and would meet again Wednesday for further talks being observed by the International Committee of the Red Cross, Afghanistan's Office of the National Security Council said on Twitter.

It was the first time the Islamists had been invited to Kabul to meet directly with government officials since they were toppled in the US-led invasion of 2001. **AFP**

Europe hits grim milestone, UN warns of humanity's worst crisis since WWII

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS, APRIL 1

THE CORONAVIRUS pandemic has claimed more than 30,000 lives in Europe alone, a global tally showed Wednesday, in what the head of the United Nations has described as humanity's worst crisis since World War II.

Italy and Spain bore the brunt of the crisis, accounting for three in every four deaths on the continent, as the grim tally hit another milestone even though half of the planet's population is already under some form of lockdown in a battle to halt contagion.

For UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the extraordinary economic and political upheaval spurred by the virus presents a real danger to the relative peace the world has seen over the last few decades.

"The disease... represents a threat to everybody in the world and... an economic impact that will bring a recession that probably has no parallel in the recent past."

"The combination of the two facts and the risk that it contributes to enhanced instability, enhanced unrest, and enhanced conflict are things that make us believe that this is the most challenging crisis we have faced since the Second World War," he said.

As companies shut down for undetermined periods and entire workforces are forced to stay home to halt the spread of COVID-19, scenes of economic desperation and unrest were emerging across the globe.

In Italy, queues were lengthening at soup kitchens while some supermarkets were reportedly pillaged.

Half a million more people now need help to afford meals, Italy's biggest union for the agriculture sector Coldiretti said, adding to the 2.7 million already in need last year.

The economic pain of lockdowns is especially acute in the developing world.

In Tunisia several hundred protested a week-old lockdown that has disproportionately hit the poor.

Africa's biggest city Lagos was set for its second full day of lockdown on Wednesday - but with some of the world's biggest slums, home to millions who live hand-to-mouth, containment will be difficult.

Wary of a collapse of the world's economy with shops shuttered and millions forced into shorter working hours or losing their jobs completely, the globe's leading central bankers have pumped billions of liquidity into the system.

Last week, G20 leaders said they were injecting \$5 trillion into the global economy to head off a feared deep recession.

In the European Union, however, battle lines have been drawn over the terms of a rescue plan.

Worst-hit Italy and Spain are leading a push for a shared debt instrument - dubbed "coronabonds". But talk of shared debt is a red line for Germany and other northern countries, threatening to divide the bloc.

The tone sharpened this week, with Italian politicians even taking out an advertisement in a major German newspaper to remind Europe's biggest economy of WWII debts in a bid to jolt it into action.



A barber cuts another man's hair on top of a closed hairdresser in Oxford, Britain. Reuters

Spain's death toll crosses 9,000 but epidemic passes peak

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MADRID, APRIL 1

SPAIN'S DEATH toll surged over 9,000 Wednesday as infections passed the 100,000 mark, but the rate of new cases continued to slow, suggesting the epidemic had peaked, health chiefs said.

Spain has the world's second-highest death toll after Italy, with the virus so far claiming 9,053 lives after a record 864 people died over the past 24 hours, while the number of confirmed cases reached 102,136.

But on a day-to-day basis, the rate of new infections continued

its week-long downward trend.

And most importantly, the number of people in hospital and those in intensive care was falling, suggesting the epidemic had reached its peak, Fernando Simon, head of the health ministry's emergency coordination unit.

"This is important," said Simon who himself was diagnosed with the virus this week. "Right now the central issue is not whether we have reached the peak or not, it seems we're already there, and the numbers are going down."

Officials said the figures gave a "very positive" indication that the unprecedented lockdown

put in place on March 14, confining Spain's population of nearly 47 million to their homes, was working.

Crunching the numbers, Wednesday's figures showed new cases increasing by just over 8.0 per cent, compared with nearly 11 per cent on Tuesday and 20 percent a week ago.

They also showed the death rate increasing at a rate of 10.6 per cent compared with 27 per cent a week ago, with Dr Maria Jose Sierra from the emergency coordination unit saying the recent fatalities were those "who were infected two or three weeks ago".

Imran vows to provide PPE to medical staff

SAJJAD HUSSAIN ISLAMABAD, APRIL 1

PAKISTAN PRIME Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday assured doctors and nurses to provide them necessary protective equipment to ensure their safety in the battle against coronavirus, as the number of the COVID-19 patients rose to 2,112 in the country.

The assurance came amid reports about shortages of protective gear for the medical staff and some doctors and nurses getting infected by the novel coronavirus that has killed over 43,000 people worldwide.



Pakistan PM Imran Khan

"Doctors, nurses and other medical staff are in the frontline of battle against coronavirus and they will be provided with the necessary protective equipment to ensure their safety and health," Khan said while inaugurating the upgradation of the Cantonment General Hospital in Rawalpindi.

Khan said that the trend of the pandemic in Pakistan would become clear in about a week. He said he was satisfied that the country was not seeing the sort of escalation of cases as seen in the Western countries.

He also said that China was providing protective equipment and ventilators to Pakistan on priority basis after controlling the virus in its own worst-affected Hubei province. Meanwhile, the number of coronavirus cases in Pakistan rose to 2,112 on Wednesday, indicating an upward trend despite efforts by the government to contain the pandemic.

According to reports, Punjab province had 748 cases, Sindh 709, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa 253, Balochistan 158, Gilgit-Baltistan 184, Islamabad 54 and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir 6.

So far, 26 people have died due to the virus and 82 have recovered, while another 10 are in critical condition. The increase in the number of cases showed that there was little impact of the measures, including partial lockdown, taken so far to reduce the spread of the disease. **PTI**

Coronavirus having little impact on climate, says UN agency

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE GENEVA, APRIL 1

THOUGH FACTORIES have shut, planes have been grounded and cars left in the garage, the coronavirus pandemic is having very little impact on climate change, the World Meteorological Organization said Wednesday.

Any reductions in pollution and carbon dioxide emissions are likely to be temporary, said Lars Peter Riishojgaard, from the infrastructure department of the WMO, a United Nations agency based in Geneva.

"It does not mean much for climate," he told a virtual press conference. While in the short term, carbon dioxide emissions would go down as cars stay put and aircraft remain on the ground, "we expect the impact will be fairly short-lived," Riishojgaard said.

"The pandemic will be over at some point and the world will start going back to work and with that, the CO2 emissions will pick up again, maybe or maybe not to quite the same level."

He said visibility in cities such as New Delhi had improved because there were fewer traffic-emitting fumes, but cautioned that it was only down to an "artificial halt" to normal activity.

China reports fewer coronavirus infections

REUTERS BEIJING, APRIL 1

CHINA, WHERE the coronavirus outbreak first emerged in December, reported dwindling new infections on Wednesday and for the first time disclosed the number of asymptomatic cases, which could complicate how trends in the outbreak are read.

Almost all of Tuesday's 36 new cases involved arrivals from overseas, the National Health Commission said, taking total infections to 81,554.

But that figure excludes 130 new sufferers of the highly contagious disease who do not show

symptoms, its statistics showed.

The identification of asymptomatic carriers comes from screening and tests of suspected cases and tens of thousands of people with whom they have had contact. As of Tuesday, there were about 20,000 people under observation, the commission said.

Citing classified data, the *South China Morning Post* said China had found more than 43,000 cases of asymptomatic infection through contact tracing. Asymptomatic infections would not cause a major outbreak if the transmission chain was cut, the Chinese government's senior medical adviser, Zhong Nanshan, told state-run *Shenzhen TV*.

Boris Johnson under fire for low number of tests

ASSOCIATED PRESS LONDON, APRIL 1

WHEN PRIME Minister Boris Johnson developed a cough and fever, he got a test for the new coronavirus. Most other Britons won't be offered one.

Johnson's Conservative government was under fire Wednesday for failing to keep its promise to increase the amount of testing being done for COVID-19, even as the country saw its biggest day-to-day rise yet in deaths among people with the virus, to 2,352.

The issue has become an incipient political crisis for

Johnson, who has mild symptoms and is working from isolation in the prime minister's Downing Street apartment.

Richard Horton, editor of medical journal *The Lancet*, said Britain's handling of the COVID-19 crisis was "the most serious science policy failure in a generation".

The UK has restricted testing to hospitalized patients, leaving people with milder symptoms unsure whether they have had the virus. Many scientists say wider testing - especially of health care staff - would allow medics who are off work with symptoms to return if they are negative, and would give a better picture of how the virus spreads.

did, until today. I am receiving messages from all over the world about her. She never spoke about how popular she was in the scientific community."

On Twitter, her colleagues described Ramjee as a woman who would be immaculately dressed, with "not a hair out of place" and a red lipstick always adorning her lips.

In 2018, the European Development Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) awarded her outstanding female scientist award for her work in HIV prevention methods. Her focus was on women health who she felt were badly hit by the HIV epidemic.

Trump: US headed for very tough, painful two weeks

LALIT K JHA WASHINGTON, APRIL 1

THE US is headed for a "very tough two weeks", President Donald Trump has warned, advising people to be prepared for the "hard days" ahead, as the country was at war with a deadly coronavirus pandemic that the White House projects could claim one to two lakh lives during the next fortnight.

Trump's remarks came as Deborah Bix, a member of White House Task Force on coronavirus, based on a model from actual data from the ground, said the death toll in the US could be between 100,000 to 200,000, with the strict implementation of the existing mitigation measures including social distancing till April 30.

If no steps were to be taken, the death toll could range between 1.5 million and 2.2 million, Bix said on a day when the confirmed number of coronavirus infections in the US, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center website, zoomed to over 189,500, adding more than 25,000 new cases in a single day and the fatalities rose to over 4,000.

"I want every American to be prepared for the hard days that lie ahead," Trump told reporters on Tuesday.

"We're going to go through a very tough two weeks and then, hopefully, as the experts are predicting, as I think a lot of us are predicting after having studied it so hard, we are going to start seeing some real light at the end of the tunnel. But this is going to be a very painful, very, very, very painful two weeks," Trump said.

Campaigning has come to a standstill and it is unlikely to revive in the next few months. The social distancing measures now have



Donald Trump

Virus deaths in NYC top 1,000

New York: Deaths from the coronavirus topped 1,000 in New York City as officials warned that the worst of the virus' toll is yet to come.

The city's Health Department reported late Tuesday that nearly 1,100 people have died of the virus in the city. More than 1,500 deaths from COVID-19 have been recorded across New York state. **AP**

been extended for another 30 days till April 30. The country is expected to face the peak in coronavirus around middle of April.

"We're going through the worst thing that the country has probably ever seen. Look, we had - the Civil War, we lost 600,000 people, right? Here's a thing, had we not done anything, we would have lost many times that. But we did something, so it's going to be, hopefully, way under that," Trump said.

"But you know, we lose more here potentially than you lose in world wars as a country. So there's nothing positive, there's nothing great about it, I want to get people in this country hope. I think it's very important," he said. **PTI**

TABLIGHI JAMAAT 18 Nepalis who attended congregation quarantined

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA KATHMANDU, APRIL 1

EIGHTEEN NEPALI Muslims, who recently returned from the Indian capital after participating in the religious gathering, have been quarantined in Saptari district in Southern Nepal.

According to spokesperson of Kanchanpur municipality Raj Kumar Shah, the India returnees have been quarantined at a newly constructed building of Lakshmi Naryan Secondary School.

Meanwhile, around 400 Indian nationals, who gathered from different parts of Nepal to return to India, have been stranded in Birgunj area in Parsa due to the closure of the India Nepal border.

According to Parsa's Superintendent of Police (SP) Ganga Panta, the huge mass of Indian citizens heading towards India via border in Parsa have been kept in an education faculty building.

Nepal cancels contract with group to import testing kits, masks from China

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE KATHMANDU, APRIL 1

THE NEPAL government on Wednesday cancelled a contract with a private business group to import necessary coronavirus testing kits, masks and medical equipment from China following allegations of large-scale corruption in the deal, and of the goods being much below the standards specified by the World Health Organization (WHO).

The OMNI Tech group had been awarded the contract on the condition that it would import the goods within five days after the Health Department terminated the tender process that it had started more than two months ago.

Public Health Department Director General Mahendra Shrestha said the contract signed with the OMNI group has been canceled, and that "the government has also confiscated a Nepal Rs 50 million deposit

amount for the over deal that was worth over a billion rupees".

The cancellation of the contract comes four days after the OMNI Tech group, which has alleged connections with the Prime Minister's secretariat, had brought ten tonnes of goods from China and had chartered another flight for Guangzhou to ferry a second consignment for Thursday.

The government's decision also means that there could be acute shortage of equipment and testing kits Nepal, which has been put under a two-week lockdown as a preventing measure against the spread of coronavirus.

Dr Madhu Ghimire, a senior physician said, "In spite of our constant advise for more than two months, the government made a last-minute decision to procure essentials in the last minute, with a purpose that was well-served by paying three times the actual market price in the pretext of urgency and difficulty in availing."

EXPERT IN MICROBICIDE RESEARCH, VACCINE DEVELOPMENT

Indian-origin virologist in South Africa dies of coronavirus

TABBASSUM BARNAGARWALA MUMBAI, APRIL 1

PROFESSOR GITA Ramjee, a renowned virologist known for her research work on HIV, died in Durban, South Africa on Tuesday evening due to complications from COVID-19.

Born in Uganda, Ramjee (63) later moved to UK to study at the University of Sunderland. She was involved in HIV prevention and treatment clinical trials in South Africa, was an expert in microbicide research, vaccine development, and has over 170 research articles under

her name. She was the chief scientific officer at The Aurum Institute. She was also the chief specialist scientist and director of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) on HIV Prevention.

The Aurum Institute took to Twitter to post the news of her death on Tuesday. Its group CEO Gavin Churchyard described her as "a bold and compassionate leader in the response to HIV".

SAMRC president and CEO Glenda Gary also issued a statement: "We are deeply saddened to inform you the tragic passing of Prof Gita Ramjee in hospital today."



Gita Ramjee was known for her research work on HIV

Ramjee had visited Mumbai two months ago for a family vacation. In March, she travelled to

London, from where she is suspected to have picked up the virus. A few days after her return to South Africa, she felt unwell and went to a doctor. "Her first test came negative or inconclusive for COVID-19. Then her breathing got worse. Last Tuesday, she was hospitalised. None of us suspected she had coronavirus," her younger sister Asmita Parashar told *The Indian Express* in Mumbai.

Last week, a second test for COVID-19 came positive.

Ramjee did not have any comorbidity like diabetes, hypertension or blood pressure problems. Her condition briefly improved during hospitalisation,

but her breathing worsened by March 26. On March 28, she was put on ventilator support.

Her husband, Pravin Ramjee has no symptoms and remains stable. Ramjee's funeral will be conducted under strict vigilance with very few people.

Her two sons live in UK, but are unable to fly to South Africa due to a 21-day lockdown in that country. Parashar, who lives in Mumbai, too is unable to attend the funeral. "Nobody from the family could meet her in her final days. Our entire family is shocked at her demise," she said.

"All these years, I never realised the stellar work my sister

13 ECONOMY

SENSEX: 28,265.31 ▼1203.18 NIFTY: 8,253.80 ▼343.95 NIKKEI: 18,065.41 ▼851.60 HANG SENG: 23,085.79 ▼517.69 FTSE: 5,456.92 ▼215.04 DAX: 9,531.81 ▼404.03

GOLD	RUPEE	OIL	SILVER
₹41,705	₹75.59	\$26.15	₹38,100

Note: Spot gold markets shut due to lockdown in major states. Currency markets were closed on account of the annual closing of accounts *Indian basket as on March 19, 2020

*International market data till 1900 IST

SALES HIT DUE TO CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, NATIONWIDE LOCKDOWN

March auto sales plunge to almost half of 2019, Maruti registers a 10-year low

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

MARUTI SUZUKI India Ltd (MSIL), the country's leading car manufacturer, on Wednesday announced a 47 per cent fall in its domestic passenger vehicle sales in March, a near 10-year low in terms of unit sales.

The company sold 76,240 units last month; the number from a year ago — March 2019 — was 1,45,031 units. Industry data show that MSIL sold 75,000-80,000 units every month on average in the second half of 2009-10, numbers that are comparable to those of March 2020.

The second largest passenger vehicle manufacturer, Hyundai Motor India, announced a 40.69 per cent decline in sales in March compared to the same period

EXPLAINED Virus the last straw in crisis

THE DECLINE in automobile sales started on account of a funding and liquidity squeeze in July-August 2018, and went on to become more of a sentiment issue, with individuals looking to postpone and cut down on consumption expenditure. The coronavirus pandemic was the last straw in the crisis.

last year. The company sold 26,300 units this March as against 44,350 units last year.

Toyota Kirloskar Motors too announced a 45 per cent decline in sales. The company sold 7,023 units in the domestic market in March as against 12,818 units in March last year.

Car sales have been under

pressure over the last 18 months on account of the slowdown in the economy and a decline in consumption. Sales took a sharp additional hit in March due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus pandemic and the nationwide lockdown that followed.

Industry sources said they expected April to be worse, as the

lockdown — currently for 21 days from March 25 — would continue for half of the month. Even after the lockdown is lifted, no one really knows how long it may take things to come back to normal, they said.

"Last month has been very challenging for us, both in terms of sales as well as production. With the spread of the COVID-19 threat in various parts of the country followed by the 21-day national lockdown, the company's priority was to ensure the safety and well-being of all stakeholders and, most importantly, our dealers and their staff..." Naveen Soni, Senior VP, sales and service, Toyota Kirloskar Motor said. "Our dealerships across the country were shut down beginning March 23, along with a temporary halt of production at our plant in Bidadi."

MSIL reported a decline in sales

across all segments. The compact segment declined 51 per cent to 40,519 units; the utility vehicle segment saw a 53.4 per cent fall, and sales in the van segment fell 63.7 per cent.

With global trade crippled by the virus, MSIL's exports declined 55 per cent — the company exported only 4,712 units in March as against 10,463 units in the corresponding month in 2019.

On March 22, as several states announced lockdowns, carmakers including MSIL, Hyundai Motors, Toyota, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles together with Fiat India Automobiles, and Hero MotoCorp announced they were cutting output. Several firms announced they would stand by their staff — there would be no retrenchments at any plant, and workers would continue to receive salaries for the period of closure.

Falling interest rates to enhance liquidity, help beat slowdown

The Centre on Tuesday decided to cut small savings interest rates by 70-140 basis points for June quarter

What happened in 2008-09?
The RBI cut the key policy rate gradually from 9 per cent in September 2008 to 4.75 per cent in April 2009

Rate cut transmission
Banks have often cited the high small-savings rates as an impediment to effective rate cut transmission *Source: Govt data*



Instruments	Rate of interest from 01.01.20 to 31.03.20	Rate of interest from 01.04.20 to 30.06.20	Compounding Frequency
Savings Deposit	4.0	4.0	Annually
1 Year Time Deposit	6.9	5.5	Quarterly
2 Year Time Deposit	6.9	5.5	Quarterly
3 Year Time Deposit	6.9	5.5	Quarterly
5 Year Time Deposit	7.7	6.7	Quarterly
5 Year Time Deposit	7.2	5.8	Quarterly
Senior Citizen Savings Scheme	8.6	7.4	Quarterly and paid
Monthly Income Account	7.6	6.6	Monthly and paid
National Savings Certificate	7.9	6.8	Annually
Public Provident Fund Scheme	7.9	7.1	Annually
Kisan Vikas Patra	7.6 (will mature in 113 months)	6.9 (will mature in 124 months)	Annually
Sukanya Samridhi Account Scheme	8.4	7.6	Annually

RBI allows export proceeds to be kept abroad for 15 mths, hikes WMA limit of state govts by 30%

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 1

CLOSE ON the heels of the repo rate cut and moratorium on term loans, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday allowed exporters to keep their proceeds outside India for 15 months and hiked the Ways and Means Advances (WMA) limit of state governments by 30 per cent to cushion the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown. The central bank has provided relief to the banking sector's capital requirements.

The RBI said the time period for realisation and repatriation of export proceeds made up to or on July 31, 2020 has been extended to 15 months from the date of export. "The measure will enable the exporters to realise their receipts, especially from COVID-19 affected countries within the extended period and also provide greater flexibility to the exporters to negotiate future export contracts with buyers abroad," the RBI said.

Currently, the value of the goods or software exports made

SBI extends OTS timeline

Mumbai: State Bank of India (SBI) has extended the timeline for payment of one-time settlement amount by three months. Now customers on-boarded under settlement scheme SBI OTS 2019, Rin Samadhan 19-20 and general compromise can meet payment obligation by June 30. **ENS**

by the exporters is required to be realised fully and repatriated to the country within a period of nine months from the date of exports. Export activities have been disrupted in the wake of the pandemic and lockdown in many countries.

Further, the RBI has decided to increase the Ways and Means Advances (WMA) limit by 30 per cent from the existing limit for all states and Union Territories to enable the state governments to tide

over the situation arising from the pandemic. The revised limits will come into force with effect from April 1, 2020 and will be valid till September 30, 2020, the RBI said.

The hike in WMA limit is pending submission of the final recommendation of an Advisory Committee, headed by Sudhir Shrivastava, set up by the RBI to review the WMA limits for state governments and Union Territories. WMA is a temporary short-term loan from the RBI to address the mismatch in revenue and expenditure. The central government on Tuesday increased the ceiling on its WMA facility by 60 per cent.

In another relief to the banking sector, the RBI has decided that it is not necessary to activate counter-cyclical capital buffer (CCyB) for a period of one year or earlier, as may be necessary. The framework on CCyB was put in place by the RBI in terms of guidelines issued on February 15, 2015, wherein it was advised that the CCyB would be activated as and when the circumstances warranted, and that the decision would normally be pre-announced.

INTERVIEW WITH NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC FINANCE & POLICY DIRECTOR

We are now repurposing from a business as usual economy to a warlike economy: NIPFP's Roy

RATHIN ROY, director, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, was one of the members of a committee chaired by NK Singh that reviewed the FRBM Act. The committee's report formed the basis to the amendment of the Act two years ago. In an interview to P VAIDYANATHAN IYER, he strongly recommends wide ranging support that will cost far more than 1 per cent of GDP. Edited excerpts:



Rathin Roy, File

As a member of the FRBM review committee, based on which the Act was amended, do you think the situation today, given the coronavirus health pandemic, and the subsequent lockdown, warrants a substantial easing?

I do not think that in the present situation an analytical framework that talks about "easing" and "tightening" is relevant. As I have said before, we are now repurposing from a business as usual economy to a warlike economy. In these circumstances money needs to be directed to the purposes of fighting the pandemic and dealing with the consequences of fighting the pandemic. We first need to clearly identify what needs to be done and what it will cost. We then address the problem of how (not how much) finance will be mobilised.

What are the main pain points, which need immediate relief?

The first priority is to make sure we have the medical equipment and personnel to execute the measures needed to identify, diagnose, and treat those seeking medical attention. As the number of cases grow, we need a massive transitory increase in healthcare financing. We need more beds, quarantining facilities etc., but going forward, the binding constraint will be our healthcare workers. Each healthcare worker who falls sick, breaks down, or is unable to perform his/her job, retards our effort. You do not want a situation where, to use a war analogy, you have aircraft that are idle because

there are no pilots or ground crew. So, we need to ensure that finance is not a constraint in increasing our spending on securing the health and lives of these personnel. I estimate we need to increase the CTC spending on these personnel by 350-400 per cent.

The second priority is to maintain supply chains such that people are able to get essential commodities and, going forward, other things needed to live a normal life. We need to spend on integrating unutilised supply chains and making sure these deliver from farm and factory to home. This is going to be expensive if social distancing is to be maintained. Third, we need to make sure all migrant workers are secure in decent surroundings and have access to counseling, communication facilities, and government services on a priority basis. This will be expensive because our migrant workers lived in cramped and insanitary conditions in the first place and we need to hence create this infrastructure.

The government announced a relief package, which was less than 1 per cent of GDP. What is your assessment of the fiscal relief requirement?

Again, "fiscal relief" is not an appropriate framework. In a warlike economy, government needs to do two things. One, protect national wealth and two, alleviate loss of national income as far as possible. This would encompass wage support, compensatory payments to those operating their own busi-

nesses and services (which is a significant chunk of the Indian workforce), and the temporary publicly financed coverage of costs associated with maintaining working and fixed capital including, but not limited to, interest relief. This will cost more than 1 per cent of GDP, so I am assuming a much larger publicly financed support package is in the offing. I hope it isn't further delayed. It has been forthcoming for some time now.

What are the avenues for fundraising?

It is important to understand that financing will have to be provided at an elevated scale and therefore "fundraising" through relief funds etc. will not do the job at the macro level. Several calibrated steps are possible.

First, the government has considerable unspent balances which should be mobilised. This will take time; therefore, it should immediately use its WMA (Ways and Means Advances) window with the RBI to mobilise these finances. The RBI has enhanced the WMA limits but it is desirable that fiscal prudence be secured by linking the extinguishing of WMAs to specific resource mobilisation by government. States are the frontline fighters of this epidemic.

The RBI should open a Rs 1 lakh crore zero interest WMA window for the states. The window should be for 11 months and its rollover can be reviewed in the ninth month. States could access this window according to some criteria. The simplest would be to use per capita population and then develop criteria according to need going forward.

Second, the government could design a specific purpose bond to raise debt resources. The current debt mobilisation system should be ring-fenced from this COVID-specific debt instrument. My preference will be for a consol-a bond that pays interest during its lifetime, has no date of expiry, and can be traded.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

LOCKDOWN EFFECT INTER-STATE MOVEMENT

Transporters raise concerns over potential penalties arising from expired e-way bills

PRANAV MUKUL & AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

WITH HUNDREDS of trucks stranded across the country since March 15 when states started to lock their borders down culminating into a national lockdown announced by the Centre, transporters have raised concerns over potential penalties arising from expired e-way bills. Having been stuck for the last two weeks, truckers have e-way bills for goods in transit or in godowns, which were getting expired and could not be renewed on due dates.

According to notified e-way bill rules, every registered supplier requires prior online registration on the e-way bill portal for the movement of these goods. The rules also specify that the permits for conventional cargo (other than over-dimensional cargo) are valid for one day for the movement of goods for 100km, and in the same proportion for following days. Tax officials have the power to scrutinise the e-way bill at any point during transit to check tax evasion.

In general, validity of the e-way bill cannot be extended but a commissioner may extend the validity period only through issuing notification for certain categories of goods. If goods are moved without generating a valid e-way bill, a fine of Rs 10,000 or amount of tax sought to be evaded, whichever is higher, may be imposed by tax authorities. In such a situation, goods, and the vehicle transporting them, can be detained or seized.

Over the last one week, there have been reports from numerous state check points of trucks laden with cargo being held up at various points. On their part, government officials said no such issue about

problems in electronic way bill, or e-way bill, has been raised by states' commercial tax authorities as of now, though they acknowledge if the e-way bills expire then regenerating them might be an issue for the transporter. "An e-way bill can be regenerated by the transporter before expiry, but yes, a problem may arise if the e-way bill has expired since the system won't allow regeneration linked to the same invoice," a government official explained.

In a petition to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Wednesday, a group of truckers pointed out that the e-way bills could not be extended by the transporters on account of closure of offices, godowns and unavailability of staff.

"We request you to issue immediate directions/guidelines to GST Commissioners (all States/UTs) for considering this unfolding situation empathetically and allow the vehicles in transit and goods not delivered to be exempted from any scrutiny or penal provisions to reach their destination smoothly, even if e-way bill is expired," Kulkaran Singh Atwal, President, All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC), wrote in the letter.

An electronic way bill or 'e-way bill' system offers the technological framework to track intra-state as well as inter-state movements of goods of value exceeding Rs 50,000, for sales beyond 10 km in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, AIMTC's Secretary General Naveen Gupta said while currently there were no flying squads on ground that reprimand truckers for expired e-way bills, there was a fear that once the lockdown is over, transporters may be penalised by taxmen. "There are no clear guidelines or SOPs currently for tax officials to deal with such a situation," he added.

Govt notifies details of 3 electronic manufacturing schemes worth over ₹48,000 cr

NEW DELHI: The Centre Wednesday notified the details of the three electronic manufacturing schemes aimed at boosting domestic production of mobile handsets, silicon chip sets, and other semiconductors. The Union Cabinet, on March 20, approved these schemes worth over Rs 48,000 crore. The first scheme is to promote large-scale domestic manufacturing. The outlay for the scheme has been kept at Rs 41,000 crore over five years, and will give incentives for manufacturing of mobiles and certain other specified electronic components. **ENS**

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 1

VOLATILE STOCK markets continued their downward journey on Wednesday with key indices plummeting by four per cent on weak global cues and capital outflows. The Sensex fell 1,203 points to 28,265.31 and the NSE Nifty Index lost 343.95 points to close at 8,253.80 in the selling avalanche.

Foreign investors pulled out Rs 61,973 crore from the equity market in March. With FPIs withdrawing another Rs 60,376 crore from the debt market, the total outflows were around Rs 1.2 lakh crore. "Today's trade witnessed

sustained selling across pivotal sectors, led primarily by technology and private sector banks as foreign wealth funds created cash by selling equities," said S Ranganathan, head of research at LKP Securities.

The first day of the financial year started off on a negative note, impacted by the negative global markets and domestic uncertainties on banks' stressed assets and auto numbers. "FPIs have net sold around Rs 62,000 crore in equity in March and with virus infections increasing, markets are anticipating a worsening of the situation," said Vinod Nair, Head of research, Geojit Financial Services.

Wall Street sinks on weak macro data, oil prices head towards \$25

REUTERS
NEW YORK/LONDON, APRIL 1

THE DOW Jones tumbled more than 700 points on Wednesday as investors fled to safe-haven assets after new orders for US-made goods plunged to an 11-year low and private payrolls fell for the first time since 2017.

At 9:56 a.m. ET the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 658.21 points at 21,258.95 and the S&P 500 was down 82.63 points at 2,501.96. Brent crude fell while US futures dipped before recovering



A robot helping in treatment of patients in Italy. **Reuters**

Wednesday, Brent crude fell \$1.1, or 4.2 per cent, to \$25.24 a barrel. WTI traded at a session low of \$19.90 a barrel.

Loan moratorium: Most pvt banks go for 'opt-in' option

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

MOST PRIVATE sector lenders have decided to go for the "opt-in" option on loan repayment moratorium, putting the onus on the customer to take the initiative of informing the bank of their choice to go for the three-month breather offered by the RBI.

HDFC Bank said it would encourage customers with adequate funds to continue repayments to avoid the extra interest charges and tenor extension of the loan.

Kotak Mahindra Bank asked customers to write to an email ID

ICICI Bank cuts rate on savings account

New Delhi: ICICI Bank on Wednesday cut interest rates on savings accounts by 25 basis points for deposits up to Rs 2 crore. The new rates will be effective from April 8, ICICI Bank said in a regulatory filing. **PTI**

for "opting in" for the moratorium. ICICI Bank decided to make the moratorium as "opt-in" for the loans generally availed by salaried customers.

BRIEFLY

ArcelorMittal plea against Essar dismissed

New Delhi: AUK court has refused to issue a worldwide freezing order against the parent company of Essar Steel and members of promoter family — Ravi and Prashant Ruia. The order came as ArcelorMittal looked to enforce a \$1.5 billion arbitral award stemming from a soured supply agreement. **PTI**

No extra spectrum needed: COAI

New Delhi: Telecom operators believe that there is no requirement of additional spectrum to maintain stability and quality of networks amid the 21-day lockdown imposed to combat the spread of coronavirus. COAI said on Wednesday. **PTI**

PowerGrid commits ₹200 crore

New Delhi: Power Grid has contributed Rs 130 crore to Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES) Fund to support India's fight against the outbreak, as per a release.

Wipro, Premji Foundation commit ₹1,125 cr

New Delhi: Wipro, Wipro Enterprises and Azim Premji Foundation said they have committed Rs 1,125 crore towards tackling the "unprecedented health and humanitarian crisis" arising from the pandemic. **ENS**

AFRICA IS WOEFULLY ILL-EQUIPPED

Continental contagion

People cannot stay away from work if they have no money



The precariousness of everyday life means that the economic effects of COVID-19 in African countries will be both colossal and different from the rich world. AP

"IN THE township people are not worried at all," says Lesedi Kgasago, a student from Soweto, Johannesburg. Among his friends "corona" is seen either as something that afflicts white people or a fiction. When life is a struggle it is hard to worry about a threat you cannot see.

Besides, asks Mr Kgasago, what can Soweitans do about it? "Self-isolation is just not practical in the 'hood.'" Most of the township is poor and crowded. Just 55% of households have piped water. "There is a mentality of if we die, we die, but we're going to have a good time," he says.

That may now be more difficult. On March 23rd Cyril Ramaphosa, South Africa's president, announced a nationwide lockdown. The number of recorded cases in the country is the highest in Africa, at 709 as of March 25th. The rate of increase is similar to that of Italy at the same stage.

Other countries in Africa could be just days behind. Most of its 54 states have confirmed infections. Some hope that hot and humid weather may slow the spread of the virus. But the evidence for that is inconclusive and any effect will be "modest", reckons Marc Lipsitch of Harvard University. "We don't know what it will do in Africa," notes David Heymann of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. But there is no reason to think it would be different from anywhere else, he says.

It could be worse. Most rich countries have struggled to respond to the outbreak. African ones have fewer medics and less kit. Social distancing is far harder in overcrowded slums. Lockdowns could increase poverty and hunger. Nor do most African countries have the money to tide people and companies over.

Africa has some advantages. It is a young continent facing a virus that mainly kills the old. There are an estimated 47m Africans over 65 and 6m over 80, out of a population of 1.3bn. In Europe the figures are 143m and 40m out of 750m people.

Africa has also had more time to prepare. Governments have closed borders and restricted air travel. Many have banned large gatherings. The vast majority of children are no longer at school. These steps have been taken sooner in the course of the disease than elsewhere. Uganda, for instance, closed schools before it had any confirmed infections. South Africa's lockdown was announced before Britain's, though Britain had more than 16 times as many known cases. Sierra Leone has declared a 12-month state of emergency despite not having a single confirmed case.

Advance warning has also allowed Africa to boost testing capacity. Today more than 40 countries can test for covid-19, up from just Senegal and South Africa in early February. Although they have many fewer testing kits than richer countries do, more are on the way. Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba and perhaps China's richest man, has donated 20,000 testing kits, 100,000 masks and 1,000 protective suits to each African country.

Experience in dealing with other infectious diseases may prove useful. Roughly one in three deaths in Africa every year is from an infectious or parasitic disease, compared with one in 50 in Europe. Recent Ebola outbreaks, across west Africa in 2014-16 and in eastern Congo in 2018-20, have taught policymakers vital lessons.

People who have dealt with Ebola, such as David Nabarro, a special envoy for covid-19 to the World Health Organisation, say it is essential to win over communities. One sign of success in Sierra Leone was when Ebola became known in the Mende language as "bonda wote", literally "family turn round"—a sign that people were changing behaviour. "I am absolutely convinced that African countries can get on top of this quicker than European countries," says Dr Nabarro.

Experts also urge vigilance. "We are veterans of outbreaks," says Monica Musenero, a Ugandan epidemiologist. The country has contained regular flare-ups of diseases such

as Ebola and Marburg virus. Whereas Ebola always "announces itself", covid-19 spreads quickly and quietly, she says. As doctors find cases of the new virus, they may be only "a child of God".

That is the worry across Africa, where outbreaks could rapidly overwhelm health systems. Sub-Saharan Africa has about one doctor for every 5,000 people, compared with one per 300 in Europe. Data are patchy, but the average American hospital may have more intensive-care beds than most African countries. Kenya has 130; Uganda 55; and Malawi about 25. In Zimbabwe there are probably even fewer in the public system, and doctors and nurses are on strike. Ventilators are scarce: Mali and Mozambique may have one per 1m people. Given the lack of capacity, the disease could be "horrific", says Tom Frieden, a former head of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention in America.

The underlying health of Africans may not help either. Doctors do not know if the more than 25m Africans infected with hiv are at greater risk from covid-19. Some speculate that anti-retroviral drugs may help fight the new virus, though early studies suggest otherwise. Even if this were the case, notes Denis Chopera, a Durban-based virologist, only about 60% of South Africans with hiv regularly take their pills.

The burden on health-care systems from covid-19 could impede treatment of other diseases. Studies of the Ebola outbreak in west Africa suggest that about as many people died because they could not get treatment for malaria, hiv and tuberculosis as from Ebola itself. Others died from being unable to give birth safely. Suppressing outbreaks of Lassa fever in Nigeria and measles in Congo could be hampered by the diversion of resources to covid-19.

Governments may also have a hard time convincing their citizens to take the new virus seriously. Fake news is one reason. Dodgy

cures and conspiracy theories are spreading on WhatsApp groups, which typically have more members in Africa than elsewhere. In Congo the virus is seen as a "mzungu" (white person) disease. Some Ethiopians see their country as blessed and therefore protected. More than a quarter of Nigerians say they are immune, most commonly because they are "a child of God".

Religion may be doing more to spread the disease than stop it. Senegal was slow to stop pilgrims from travelling to the holy city of Touba, despite an outbreak. A Christian gathering in South Africa has been linked to another outbreak. Thousands still attend megachurches in Nigeria. Although many pastors and imams are spreading the gospel of handwashing, others are talking nonsense. Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia have promoted quack "cures" involving garlic, lemon and ginger. Prices of these foodstuffs have risen by more than 200%, and fights have broken out in markets over them.

Many African leaders have been swift to ban religious meetings. Some churches are streaming services online. But this is not the case in Tanzania, where President John Magufuli has refused to close churches, saying: "That's where there is true healing. Corona is the devil and it cannot survive in the body of Jesus."

African governments face practical as well as spiritual obstacles. The state's ability to enforce social distancing and lockdowns is questionable in cities, where two in every five Africans live. More than half of city-dwellers are in crowded slums (see

map). In Alexandra, a slum in Johannesburg, there are more than 9,000 households per square km, compared with fewer than 700 in neighbouring Sandton, a posh suburb. In Kampala 71% of households sleep in a single room. Frequent handwashing with soap is difficult. In Makoko, a huge slum in Lagos, less than 20% of households have piped water. Conditions in refugee camps are often worse.

Persuading slum-dwellers to stay in one-room shacks with many relatives will be tougher than getting people in New York or London to stay on the sofa watching Netflix. And few can work from home. Six in ten Ugandan workers are either self-employed or help out in a family business. If people do not work they do not eat, says Steven Agaba, who lives in a poor part of Kampala, Uganda's capital. He gestures at a man selling fruit from a tarpaulin spread across the muddy ground. "It will not be the coronavirus to kill us, but the hunger." It may also send the poor back to their villages, further spreading the disease.

The precariousness of everyday life means that the economic effects of COVID-19 in African countries will be both colossal and different from the rich world. The welfare of a billion people depends on how governments balance saving lives from the virus while minimising economic damage in a continent where more than 400m people live on the equivalent of less than \$1.90 a day. It is not at all clear how this Gordian knot can be untied.

The hit to economies was already apparent even before the first case of covid-19 was re-

ported in Africa. More than 80% of its exports go to the rest of the world, the highest share of any big region save Australasia. About half of these are raw materials. As commodity prices have plunged, so have forecasts for growth and tax receipts.

Other industries have been hammered too. Tourism, which employs more than 1m people in each of Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia and South Africa, has collapsed. In Kenya and Ethiopia, both exporters of flowers, bulbs are being fed to cows and roses are rotting in heaps. Manufacturing is stricken. Orders have dried up for clothes exporters in Ethiopia, Ghana and Lesotho.

Trade is at a trickle. Dozens of scheduled ships are either not turning up at Mombasa port, in Kenya, or arriving partly empty. Remittances could soon dry up—a disaster for the 13 African countries where that money is worth more than 5% of gdp. (In Lesotho remittances equate to 23%.) The overall effect is "more serious than 2008", says Albert Zeufack, the chief economist for Africa at the World Bank.

In some countries such as Malawi, where most people subsist by growing their own food, the economic impact of covid-19 may be relatively small. But in many others, the clampdowns on economic life are adding to the pain. Restrictions on movement and commerce will be especially harmful to workers in the informal economy—that is, most of the African labour force. Roughly 85% of workers do not receive a regular reported wage.

On March 21st Rwanda closed its border with Congo. The livelihoods of petty traders who buy food in one country and sell it in the other are in peril. In Goma, on the Congolese side, Naomi Sifa sits with a pile of bananas a few metres from the desolate frontier. By selling them in Rwanda she would normally make 3,000 francs (\$1.77) each day, just enough to feed her family. No longer. "If they keep the border closed, they will kill people

Sub-Saharan Africa has about one doctor for every 5,000 people, compared with one per 300 in Europe. Data are patchy, but the average American hospital may have more intensive-care beds than most African countries

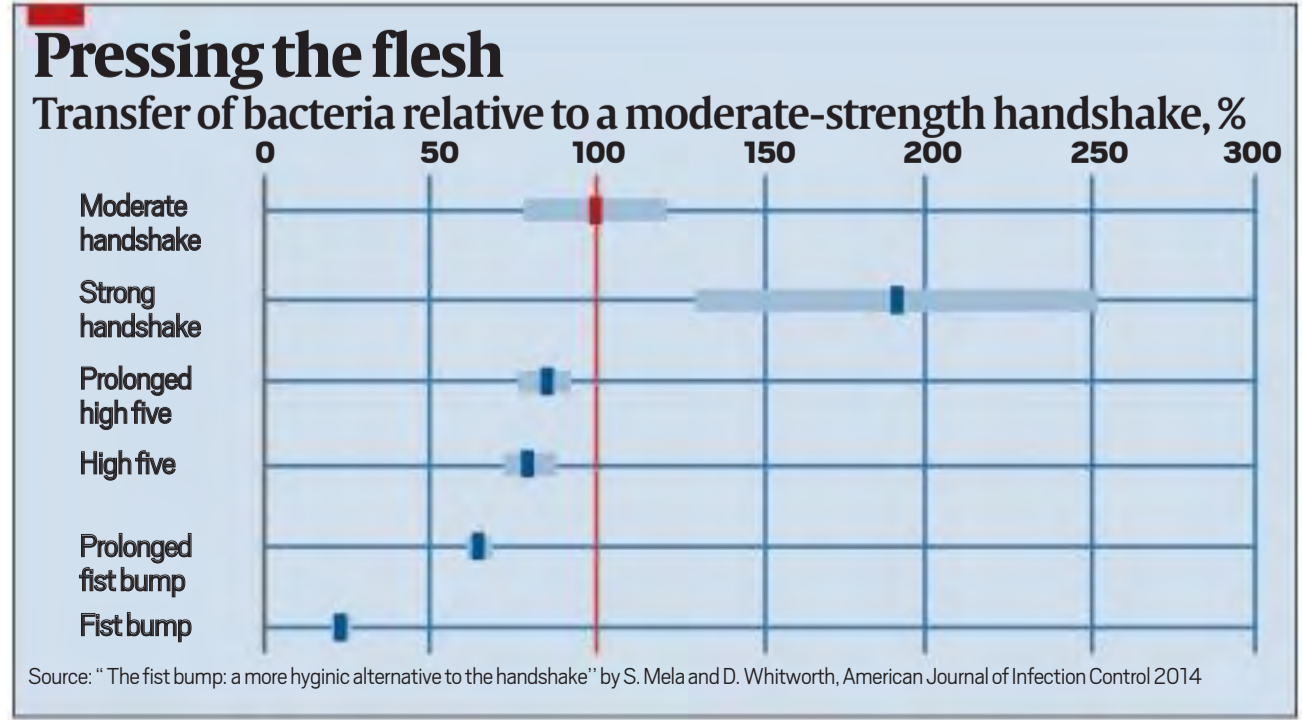
CHANGING GREETINGS MAY HELP

Coronavirus etiquette

Handshakes are potential harbingers of COVID-19

IN 1439 King Henry VI of England banned kissing as a greeting to stop the spread of the Black Plague. Today, as covid-19 spreads around the world, authorities are encouraging similar measures to fight infection. In China, to avoid hand-shaking, people are being told to greet one another with a gong shou gesture, where a palm is folded over the opposite fist. In the Gulf, citizens are saying hello with a wave rather than the traditional "nose to nose" greeting. And in Italy and France, friends and acquaintances are eschewing the customary peck on both cheeks.

Such efforts are more effective than they might seem. A paper published in 2014 explored how greeting rituals spread infectious diseases. David Whitworth and Sara Mela, two biologists at Aberystwyth University in Wales, dipped a glove in bacteria, before using it to greet another person wearing a sterile glove. Bacteria can be transmitted in a



similar way to the new coronavirus. They found that a handshake transfers almost

twice as much bacteria as a high five, which in turn transmits twice that of a fist bump.

The duration of greetings matters, too. Stronger and longer handshakes transfer more bacteria than weaker, shorter ones. The same goes for high fives.

Many therefore seek to avoid any contact at all. Mike Pence, the American vice-president, has taken to greeting people with the "elbow-bump", which was adopted in some places during past epidemics, eg, of avian flu and Ebola. The "Wuhan shuffle" involves bumping feet. And in Iran, which has the worst outbreak of covid-19 outside China, some have taken to bumping hips.

Substituting handshakes for fist, elbow and foot bumps may help slow the spread of COVID-19. But epidemiologists say the most reliable way to stop the fast-spreading illness, which by March 6th infected more than 100,000 people and killed 3,400, is frequent and thorough hand-washing (the WHO recommends doing so five times a day). Like the common cold, covid-19 is thought to spread via droplets of moisture ejected when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or just speaks. Even without shaking hands, people can contract the disease by touching something an infected person has come into contact with, and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes. Handwashing helps prevent this.

For many, especially in poor countries, following this advice is easier said than done. According to the World Bank, only a quarter of people in sub-Saharan Africa have access



German interior minister Horst Seehofer on March 2 turned away Chancellor Angela Merkel's offer of a handshake this morning after revealing he had stopped shaking hands over virus fears. Reuters

to basic handwashing facilities including soap and water. In Ethiopia, the figure is just 8%; in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 4%. Still, changing habits can help. The disease has already reached the region. On March 5th Cyril Ramaphosa, South Africa's presi-

dent, warned of a coming crisis after the country confirmed its first case. The news, as well as many meetings around the world, will be greeted with trepidation.

with hunger," she says. The economic consequences of covid-19 have not escaped African epidemiologists. For John Nkengasong, director of Africa cdc, a public-health body, the virus could be a "national-security crisis first, an economic crisis second, and a health crisis third", if the responses are not calibrated appropriately. That does not mean letting the disease rip, but it does mean "community engagement" and careful monitoring of knock-on effects on poverty and the treatment of other diseases.

African authorities will probably struggle to shut down cities to the extent seen in Europe, never mind China. For the moment, though, they are trying to combine restrictions on movement with some steps to ease the economic pain. The Seychelles, for example, has pledged salary guarantees for private-sector employees for three months. South Africa has announced a tax holiday for businesses to encourage them to keep paying workers, and its central bank is extending credit lines to keep firms afloat. Senegal aims to spend about 6% of gdp feeding people and helping firms, but it must appeal for funds to do so.

No country is able to match the sums being spent in the West. Social safety nets, where they exist, tend to support old people and mothers, not the jobless. Cash transfers would be the quickest and most efficient response to avert mass poverty. So far, in response to the covid-19 crisis, 69 countries globally have introduced, adapted or expanded social-protection schemes. Yet in sub-Saharan Africa only South Africa and Kenya have done so.

The lack of action is in large part because African countries do not have enough money to do more. Between 2010 and 2018 average public debt in sub-Saharan Africa rose from 40% to 59% of gdp, the fastest increase of any developing region. More than half of African countries are above the imf's recommended limit for public debt. The World Bank says that 29 out of 47 African countries need to tax more than they spend just to keep their debt constant as a share of the economy. But their tax revenues are about to plummet and the cost of borrowing is soaring as investors flee to safety.

A fiscal response on the scale seen in the rich world would require outside help. Abiy Ahmed, Ethiopia's prime minister, has asked the g20 for an emergency package worth \$150bn to boost health spending, shore up foreign reserves and patch up social safety nets. He wants the World Bank's investment arm to tide over African companies hit by disruptions to global supply chains, for the imf to increase its lending to poor countries and for existing debt to be rolled over or forgiven.

The West's response may determine its relationships with African countries for decades. If the rich world declines to help more, China will probably dominate the response. Mr Ma's gift may soon be followed by economic assistance, which could cement China's position as the main partner for many African countries.

Other political consequences of COVID-19 will soon become clear. One may be a rise in xenophobia. Ethiopia and Cameroon, among others, have seen attacks on foreigners or their property. Autocrats such as Uganda's Yoweri Museveni or Mr Magufuli may take advantage of a distracted world, and find covid-19 a convenient reason to delay elections or arrest dissidents.

What will ultimately determine the fate of leaders on the continent, though, is how they combine their direct response to the virus with mitigating its vast indirect costs. Mr Ramaphosa has largely been open, decisive and bold. But even he will struggle to maintain public support as he tries to enforce a long lockdown. African countries face an unenviable task, which they cannot address alone. In trying to "flatten the curve" of the number of infected, they risk crushing their people.

15 TALK ART, MUSIC, STYLE, FOOD



HOME THEATRE The American Film Institute has launched an online movie club with the help of filmmaker Steven Spielberg...

SNAPSHOTS



Now Showing THE DHARAMSHALA International Film Festival (DIFF) has started the DIFF Viewing Room...



Sounds of the City AN ANTI-CORONAVIRUS song from Senegal, applause for health workers in Paris...

New Records

AUCTION HOUSE Sotheby's, that has decided to move all the live auctions online due to the COVID-19 pandemic...

On a Screen Near You

With rising TRPs during the nationwide lockdown, channels are turning to classics

EKTA MALIK

EARLIER, THE television would be on for three to four hours a day and I would alternate between news and reality dance shows...



(Clockwise from top) Stills from Ramayana, Karrle Tu Bhi Mohabbat and Maharaj Ki Jai Ho

No new content can be developed at this time, with most production activities coming to a halt

SHASHI SHEKHAR VEMPATI CEO, PRASAR BHARATI

maximum growth in viewership can be seen in the afternoon band (12-2 pm) and morning band (10 am to 12 pm)...

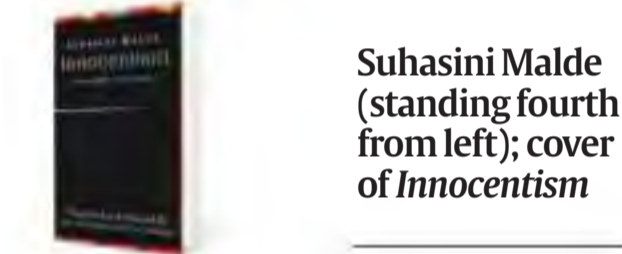
ries as the lockdown is a temporary phenomenon, post which one would resume shoots and continue with the usual lineup...

Anything but Typical

On World Autism Day, Suhasini Malde talks about her book Innocentism that explores the joys of devoting a life for the betterment of autistic children

ANUSHREE MAJUMDAR

THE NATIONWIDE lockdown to combat the spread of COVID-19 is not going to stop Suhasini Malde from checking in with her children...



a jhola - that's not true. I have my own practice and my lifestyle but it is possible to help those who might need my help...

Maharashtra; it was published by Rajhans Prakashan in 2008. The first print run sold out in less than a year and the book went on to win six awards...

CROSSWORD 4081



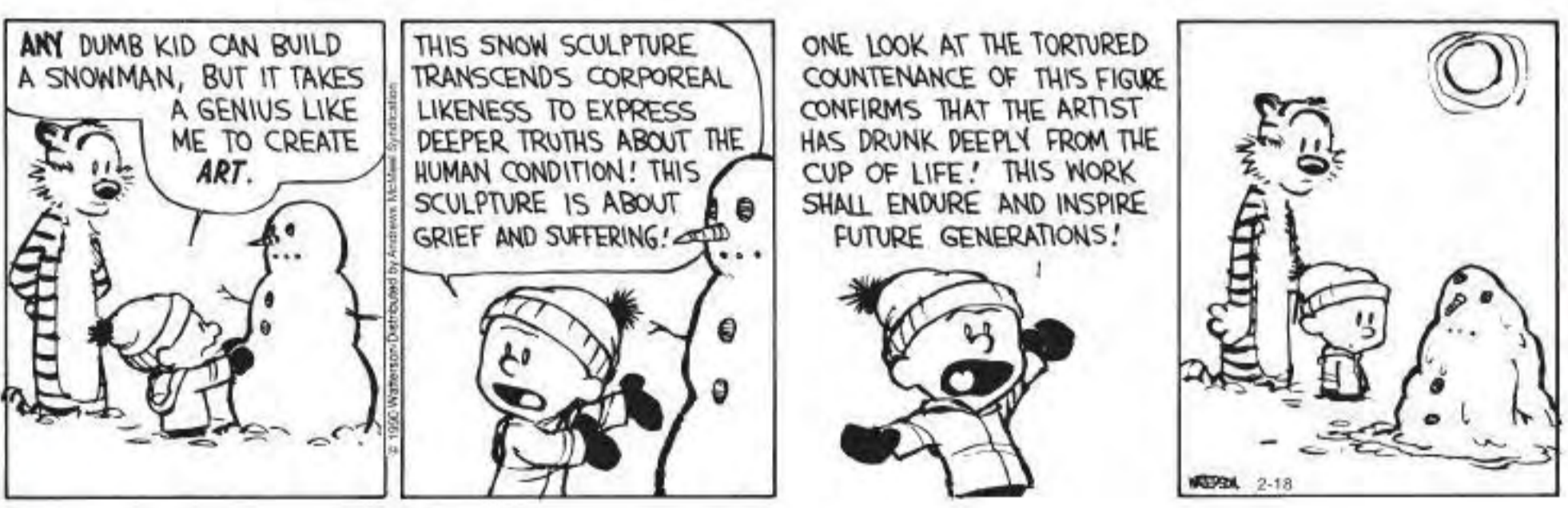
- ACROSS: 1 Order alteration in grey coat (8), 5 It serves food containing calcium and iron (4), 9 She upsets Roland endlessly (5), 10 Many get mad with desire (7), 11 He's welcome to talk Latin (7,5), 13 Defer or deter (3,3), 14 Squirm, and turn whiter (6), 17 Maybe a paper is torn making them (12), 20 Beg for an adjustment in net rate (7), 21 French resort sounds right for a relative (5), 22 Measure part of the rigging (4), 23 Worship of images adroitly modified (8)

Solutions Crossword 4080: Across: 1 Icelandic, 8 Leave, 9 Montage, 10 Bamboo, 11 Zealot, 12 Immersed, 15 Dividend, 18 Isolde, 20 Rarity, 21 Diadems, 22 Eagle, 23 Sure thing...

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson

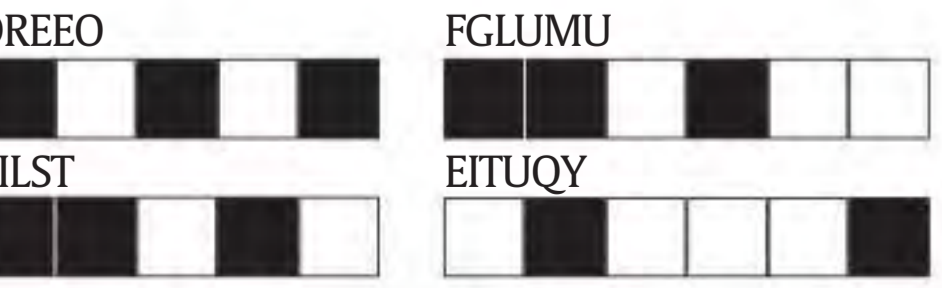


MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below...



Answers: DREEO, EILST, FGLUMU, EITUQY

Difficulty Level 2s Instructions To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns...



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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4166 6 1 2 4 3 9 5 7 8 5 8 3 7 2 1 6 9 4 7 9 4 5 8 6 1 2 3 2 4 7 6 9 8 3 5 1 9 5 8 3 1 4 2 6 7 1 3 6 2 7 5 8 4 9 8 7 1 9 5 2 4 3 6 4 2 9 1 6 3 7 8 5 3 6 5 8 4 7 9 1 2

DAY TODAY BY PETER VIDAL

- ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20) There are some wonderfully powerful planetary indicators... LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23) Planetary conditions are turbulent... TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21) You may be tempted to try your luck... GEMINI (May 22 - June 21) Increasingly, this is a time for a spot of raw ambition... CANCER (June 22 - July 23) The reason for colleagues' off-hand behaviour... LEO (July 24 - Aug 23) According to astrologers... VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23) Today's most interesting planetary aspect... AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19) All your instincts and hunches should prove correct... PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20) An unexpected turn of events may come as a welcome salvation...

UEFA EXTENDS SUSPENSION

UEFA has suspended all Champions League and Europa League matches "until further notice" due to the coronavirus pandemic, European football's governing body said after a meeting on Wednesday.

To stick or twist: The Premier League dilemma

To void the season or to freeze it, or extend it even if it runs into late autumn; the Premier League is caught in a quagmire. At the moment, the competition is suspended until April 30, but with the National Health Service (NHS) saying the UK would do well to keep the coronavirus death toll below 20,000, the future looks uncertain.

Can the season be voided?

The Premier League rulebook doesn't have a provision to void the season. However, it is learnt that a 14-club consensus can allow the authorities to make the season null and void. The Premier League has 20 clubs in its fold and to start with, those not in favour of writing off the season will sue. Also, a write-off means expunging the whole season as if it never happened. In case the season is voided, Unai Emery still remains Arsenal manager and not Mikel Arteta. Bruno Fernandes and Odion Ighalo haven't signed for Manchester United. Jose Mourinho hasn't replaced Mauricio Pochettino at Tottenham Hotspur... These are just a few examples. Also, all the goals, assists and saves will have to be deleted from the record books.

How many clubs favour a write-off?

According to a report in *The Independent*, at least four clubs are in favour of voiding the season. West Ham United vice-chair Karen Brady was the first to back a write-off, through a newspaper column earlier this month. Backlash ensued. But of late, the idea is reportedly gaining momentum. Former Manchester United and England centre-half Rio Ferdinand has called for the 2019-20 season to be scrapped. Even Spurs' Harry Kane is now supporting it.

What are financial and legal implications?

Last season, the Premier League's central payment to the clubs, the broadcast and commercial revenue share, was in excess of £2.4 billion. It included equal share, facility fees, merit payment, international TV and central commercial. By a rough estimate, if the ongoing season is voided, the clubs collectively will suffer a revenue loss of £1.2 billion. This is a reason why a majority of the clubs still want to complete the season. With regard to possible legal ramifications, the Premier League's broadcast rights are worth £9.2 billion for the 2019-2022 cycle. It means the broadcasters pay the Premier League a shade over £3 billion per season. In case the season is voided, the broadcasters will have a legal, also contractual, right to demand their money back.

Can they freeze the season?

Freezing the Premier League season, as it stands, will mean handing over the title to Liverpool and that's the easier part. With 82 points from 29 matches, Liverpool



English Premier League's broadcast rights are worth £9.2 billion for the 2019-2022 cycle.

have all but taken an unassailable lead and are basically just two wins away from securing the title. But with five clubs – Manchester United, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Sheffield United, Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal – vying for a top-four spot, freezing the season will deny them the chance to qualify for the Champions League next season.

SIMPLY PUT

A club like Manchester United can face a revenue drop up to £67 million if they fail to qualify for the Champions League. In the bottom half, six clubs – Brighton, West Ham, Watford, Bournemouth, Aston Villa and Norwich City – are locked in a relegation scrap. If the season is frozen, there will be no relegation and the bottom-placed clubs' revenue from the Premier League next term will be secured. At the same time, the authorities will have to freeze the season lower down the line too, which means toppers in the Championship – Leeds United and West Bromwich Albion, for example – will miss out on promotion and their share of revenue. The same rule applies in case the season is made null and void. In any case, the Premier League unilaterally can't write-off the season. The Football Association and the English Football League, too, must agree.

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY

Tennis faces break point

Cancellation of Wimbledon adds to fears that the entire season could be scrapped in coming days

SHAHID JUDGE
MUMBAI, APRIL 1

EXACTLY A month ago, the world of men's tennis welcomed a new ATP champion. Thiago Seyboth Wild, then just a few days short of his 20th birthday, became the first men's singles player born in the 2000s to have won a tour title, when he beat Casper Ruud in the final of the Chile Open. Words of congratulations were still pouring in for the current world No.114, when, a few weeks later, he became the first professional tennis player to be diagnosed with the novel Coronavirus. A few days ago, former French Open doubles champion Patrick McEnroe too tested positive.

On Wednesday, the All England Club decided to cancel Wimbledon, a development that triggered fears of the rest of the 2020 season getting scrapped. The day also saw ATP and WTA extending the blanket suspension of all tour events till July 13. However, there were several voices that expressed doubts about the restart of the men's and women's tour this year. More so since most of the tournaments scheduled later in the year happen to be in countries – US and UK – that are struggling to deal with the Covid 19 outbreak. (See box)

With Wimbledon, the oldest Grand Slam, being scrapped for the first time since World War II, the reactions from across the world were extreme. "Devastated," tweeted eight-time champion Roger Federer.

All England Club chairman Ian Hewitt said: "It has weighed heavily on our minds that the staging of The Championships has only been interrupted previously by world wars. But, following thorough and extensive consideration of all scenarios, we believe that it is a measure of this global crisis that it is ultimately the right decision to cancel this year's Championships."

This was a cue for talks on the tennis circuit that the remainder of the 2020 season wouldn't take place. Some important voices in tennis have painted a picture of gloom, at least for this year.

"For tennis to come back this year is going to be tough," Craig Tiley, CEO of Tennis Australia, the body which organises the Australian Open, told *The Age*. "It relies on global travel, and that's probably the last thing that's going to come back. Sports that have a domestic focus are in a strong position and sports that have a global focus are more challenged."

Looking at the amount of travel tennis involves around the year, Tiley's assessment was pragmatic.

Consider how the tennis tour works: players, their coaches, managers, trainers, et al, umpires and tournament officials travel from country to country, week in week out, either competing or organising event after event (this pertains to all levels of the tour).

At the same time, apart from washing hands at regular intervals, one of the main precautions required to control the spread of the pandemic is to maintain social distancing and to stay indoors at all times. In other words, the essence of the tour – the travel – in itself is tennis' greatest problem at this time of crisis.

Based on a report by *The Times*, world No.1 and 17-time major winner Novak Djokovic – who won what may just be the only Grand Slam to be played this calendar year when he won his eighth Australian Open crown – is said to have connected with other players over a conference call to float the idea of "calling an early end to this season."

Simultaneously, there has been some thought that the tour may be pushed back to



Since 1877, Wimbledon has been held every year except from 1915-18 and 1940-45 because of wars. AP

Game, set, match 2020?

A host of important events are scheduled to take place after the Wimbledon Championships, all of which face the threat of being cancelled. Here's a look at those events and how their respective venues are currently coping with the pandemic.

MEN'S EVENTS

CANADIAN MASTERS (TORONTO, AUGUST 10): The city has currently cancelled all events till June 30, with new reports suggesting the restrictions will be extended till July.

CINCINNATI MASTERS (AUGUST 16): The state is currently in lockdown till April 6, but is expected to extend the stay-at-home period.

SHANGHAI MASTERS (OCTOBER 11): Based on reports, many cities in China have ended their lockdown period, including Shanghai.

PARIS MASTERS (NOVEMBER 2): The Il-de-France region, where Paris lies, is considered the most impacted area in France, accounting for 1176 of the 3523 deaths reported throughout the country till Wednesday.

ATP NEXT GEN FINALS, MILAN (NOVEMBER 10): The Lombardy region of Italy, whose capital is Milan, is the worst hit area in Italy.

ATP FINALS, LONDON (NOVEMBER 15): The capital city is currently under lockdown.

MADRID DAVIS CUP (NOVEMBER

29): After Italy, Spain has registered the most number of casualties due to the coronavirus, 9053, with an additional 589 lives lost on Wednesday. Madrid has been considered the epicentre of the pandemic in Europe.

WOMEN'S EVENTS

MONTREAL PREMIER 5 (AUGUST 10): Montreal accounts for almost half of the 1991 cases in Quebec, as of March 31. The city however, is not currently under lockdown.

CINCINNATI PREMIER 5 (AUGUST 17): The city in lockdown till April 6, but that is expected to be extended.

WUHAN PREMIER 5 (SEPTEMBER 27): The coronavirus had reportedly originated in Wuhan. The city is still in lockdown.

CHINA OPEN (BEIJING) PREMIER MANDATORY (OCTOBER 3): No new local cases have been reported in Beijing, and the lockdown has ended.

WTA FINALS, SHENZHEN (NOVEMBER 1): The city was one with the most number of imported cases (travellers to Shenzhen) in China. **ENS**

the latter months of the year – a period normally used as an off-season by players – to hold events that had been suspended from their usual slots earlier in the year.

"The players will have to create their own spacing in the calendar, but for the tournaments' and players' sake you have got to utilise all the weeks in the calendar that are available," four-time Grand Slam champion and former world No.1 Jim Courier said to *The New York Times*.

With Wimbledon cancelled this year, and with the pandemic looking unlikely to slow down anytime soon, the US Open, scheduled to start on August 31, may soon suffer the same fate.

The United States has had 188,647 people test positive (the most for any country) for the virus as on Wednesday noon, and 4059 people losing their lives to it.

New York City, where the last major of the year is played, is considered the hotspot for the coronavirus in the US. Furthermore, the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Centre – the stadium complex where the matches are played – has lent its facilities to aid in relief work.

The Louis Armstrong Stadium, which has a capacity of 14,000 and is the second biggest of the three show courts at the venue, has been converted to a commissary that prepares meal packages for up to 25,000. Also, an indoor training area is now a makeshift hospital with 350 beds.

For this year, the French Open, rather controversially, has been postponed to a week after the US Open ends.

But given the rate at which the pandemic has been spreading, and with players discussing the prospect of cancelling the season, Roland Garros too may be suspended this year.

If the US Open is cancelled this year, it'll be the first time it has happened for the event since its first edition in 1877.

It was the only Grand Slam that did not cancel during either of the two World Wars.

Free-pass into Pirlo's free-kick philosophy

"I'm Italian, but I'm also part-Brazilian. Pirlinho, if you like. When I take my free-kicks, I think in Portuguese and at most I'll do the celebrating in my native tongue. I strike those dead balls alla Pirlo. Each shot bears my name and they're all my children."

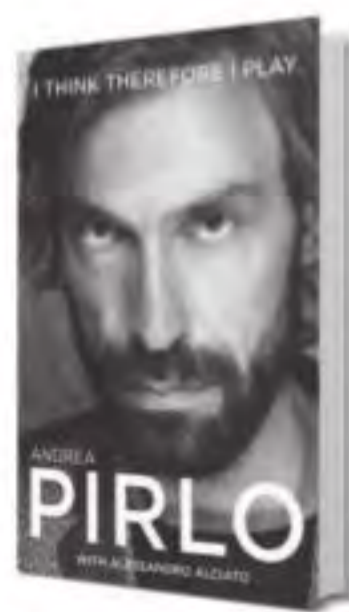
— ANDREA PIRLO, I THINK THEREFORE I PLAY

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THE INSPIRATION for the title of Andrea Pirlo's autobiography was French philosopher Rene Descartes' words: Cogito Ergo Sum, translated as "I think, therefore I am." Similarly, Pirlo's obsession with free-kicks was a deep, philosophical quest, not only a pursuit of sporting perfection but also of spiritual, soul-sating satisfaction.

It began in the living room of his family home in Fiero, when he would move the sofa in front of the living room window as a child and strike, nay stroke, a sponge ball in the space between the sofa and the window. Like the Brazilian genius Zico, who would hang a shirt in each top corner of a goal-post and challenge himself to take one of them down from 20 yards.

It was not Zico, but another Brazilian who marvelled and inspired Pirlo, who



ONE-PARA REVIEW

I THINK THEREFORE I PLAY
ANDREA PIRLO

If books are portable magic, paragraphs teased out of a tome can in themselves be strands of sorcery. The Indian Express writers pick engaging sections from sports books and put them under the magnifying glass. This is a slow walk on the intriguing mid-path that lies between Twitter-sized tidbit trailers and intense cover-to-cover book recos.

made him feel inadequate, the less-romanticised but more versatile Juninho Pernambucano, who could cajole the ball into doing whatever his mind conjured. Booming, swirling strikes with the instep; gentle, placed curlers; head-down blasters that shoot past a hapless goalkeeper before he can say Juninho Pernambucano; and, of course, the wobbling knuckleball. "During his time at Lyon, that man made the ball do some quite extraordinary things. He'd lay it on the ground, twist his body into a few strange shapes, take his run-up and score. He never got it wrong. Never. I checked out his stats and realised it couldn't just be chance," Pirlo writes.

It became an obsession, his waking

thought, he spent several hours forensically dissecting his technique. He collected DVDs, old photographs of games he'd played, interview some of his old teammates and goalkeepers. And one night in Milan, he pieced together the magic of Juninho. "The magic formula was all about how the ball was struck, not where: only three of Juninho's toes came into contact with the leather, not his whole foot as you might expect."

Pirlo gives a more detailed explanation: "In essence, the ball needs to be struck from underneath using your first three toes. You have to keep your foot as straight as possible and then relax it in one fell swoop. That way, the ball doesn't spin in the air, but does drop

rapidly towards the goal. That's when it starts to rotate."

But what he theorised didn't instantly materialise on the field. It required immense practice. Every day, Pirlo would borrow extra footballs from groundsmen and hang around practising the "Juninho" style. And often the ball went out of the training ground. And he would pretend he had done it intentionally. "I would often tell them, 'Boys, I want to give you a present'. The misses went on for several days and by that time the bloke in charge of the kit store was getting somewhat peeved. For him, it was a case of too many lost balls becoming a ball ache as I persisted with my experiments. Days soon turned into weeks."

Pirlo, though, was relentless. And he did eventually master most tricks one could perform with a football.

That said, free-kick isn't really the right word; with Pirlo, it was more a free-pass. He would stroll up and, with his body leaning back, simply caress the ball. "For me, the best feeling in life is watching the ball fly into the net after it whizzes a couple of centimetres over the heads of the defenders. They can almost reach it, but not quite. They can read the maker's name, but they can't stop it going in. Sometimes a pinch of sadism is the ingredient that makes victory taste that little bit sweeter."

And each one bore his name. Each one was his child. And he thought, he played and therefore he was.



Andrea Pirlo was relentless and eventually mastered most tricks one could perform with a football.