

**DAY 10: TESTING GAINS MOMENTUM, 10,034 SAMPLES IN A DAY, 69,245 SO FAR**

# Tablighi spread grows larger: 647 cases across 14 states

## In 3 days, cases double across India, 25% linked to Tablighi meet

**ABANTIKA GHOSH & ARUN JANARDHANAN**  
NEW DELHI, CHENNAI, APRIL 3

**CORONA COUNT**

2547 CASES  
62 DEATHS  
163 RECOVERED

WHILE THE number of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) cases across the country has doubled in the last three days, from 1,251 on March 31 to 2,547 on April 3, over 25 per cent of the positive cases so far are linked to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in the Capital last month.

Of the 478 new cases reported in the last 24 hours — the highest single-day spike so far — at least 247 have been traced to the gathering at Markaz Nizamuddin attended by over 4,000 people.

Briefing the media Friday, Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, said 647 cases linked to the congregation had been reported from 14 states so far. On Thursday, the tally was 400.

Many states have seen a sharp spike in cases in the last few days, fuelled by those who

attended the gathering and their contacts. Tamil Nadu, for instance, reported 102 new cases on Friday, of which 100 were linked to the Delhi meet.

Telangana reported 75 new cases, all linked to the Tablighi Jamaat gathering. In Uttar Pradesh, 40 of the 48 new cases reported in the last 24 hours were traced to the congregation.

"If we look at the last few days, the primary reason for increase is the number of cases at a particular level. Otherwise, because of our efforts to promote social distancing and effectively implement the lockdown, cases were coming, but the rate of increase had not gone up. We have

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



At the Yamuna Sports Complex auditorium in Delhi, Friday. It houses the homeless and migrants stopped by police. *Amit Mehra*

## For 9 minutes at 9 pm on Sunday, light diyas: PM

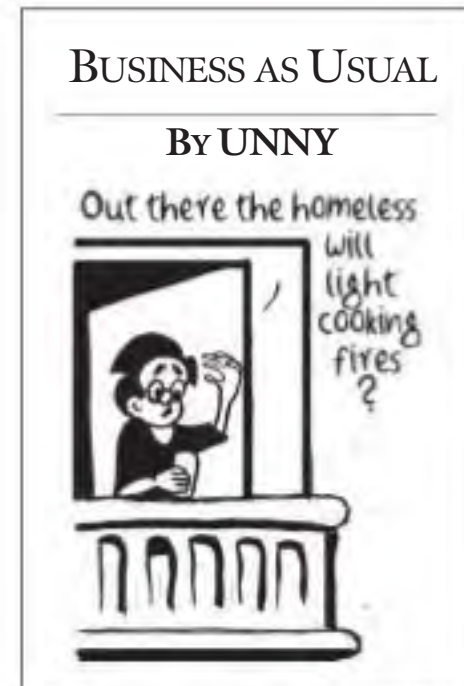
**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

FIFTEEN DAYS after he exhorted citizens to clap, ring bells, and beat utensils to thank the providers of essential services during the Janata Curfew of March 22, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday asked for the unleashing of the "superpower of 130 crore Indians"

to challenge the darkness of the coronavirus crisis with the "glory of light".

In a video address to the nation at 9 am, Modi asked people to light candles and diyas, or switch on torches or mobile phone flashlights, for nine minutes at 9 pm on Sunday, April 5, to "illuminate the common purpose we are all fighting for".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



## IIT, IIM class of 2020: Job offers in hand but up in the air, alarm bells on campus

**RITIKA CHOPRA**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

BY MARCH this year, the country's top three Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), had secured job offers for almost 4,000 students. Placement season is usually celebration time on campus but this year is different — than any other in recent history.

Earlier this week, a leading US-based consultancy rescinded its offer to 11 students across IIT-Delhi, IIT-Kanpur and IIT-Madras and six at IIM-Calcutta this week. This is being seen as an early warning sign across campuses, putting as it does a question mark over jobs secured by the graduating batch of these top engineering and business schools. The COVID-19 lockdown and the looming economic distress, the IITs and IIMs fear, could force many more companies to rethink their placement offers.

The All IITs' Placement Committee (AIPC), in anticipation of problems, has reached out to all companies (that visited

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Bhilwara District Collector Rajendra Bhatt (centre) with patients discharged in the city Friday. *Express*

## Relief in hotspot Bhilwara: No case in four days, 17 recover, nine are discharged

**DEEP MUKHERJEE**  
JAIPUR, APRIL 3

SEVENTEEN PEOPLE have recovered from the COVID-19 infection in Rajasthan's Bhilwara, which had emerged as a hotspot for the outbreak last month, and nine of them have been discharged from hospital, state officials said Friday.

The district, which had topped the state's coronavirus chart with 26 cases and two deaths, has not reported any fresh case since March 30, officials said.

"This has been possible because of heavy containment and working in coordination with the district administration, which implemented the curfew in totality. An extensive survey of more than 20 lakh people was carried out and we identified people with influenza-like symptoms," Additional Chief Secretary (Health), Rohit Kumar Singh, told *The Indian Express*.

Singh said the 17 who recovered were treated "with hydroxychloroquine (HCC), Tamiflu and HIV drugs".

"Among the 17 people who have recovered, nine have tested negative for coronavirus thrice," said Bhilwara District Collector Rajendra Bhatt. These nine patients were discharged Friday and directed to stay in home quarantine for 14 days.

However, the administration is not taking any chance and has decided to extend the curfew imposed in the district by 10 days till April 13. "During this period, even shops of essential commodities such as groceries and medicines will remain closed, and goods will be delivered at the doorstep of residents. All that the public needs to do is to call the helpline and tell us about their requirement. Vegetables will be supplied only twice during this 10-day-period," said Bhatt.

"We don't want to lose this advantage because of one lapse, and that is why this even more intense 10-day-long curfew has been imposed because this period is critical," said ACS Singh.

According to a March 26 report by the District Collector's office, the first positive case was

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## BJP chief Nadda cautions party leaders: Don't give corona a communal twist

**LIZ MATHEW**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

BJP PRESIDENT J P Nadda is learnt to have urged his party leaders to refrain from giving any "communal colour" or create any "division or differences" over the Covid-19 outbreak.

This comes after more than 400 positive cases and 15 corona deaths have been reported across the country which, officials said, can be traced back to a Tablighi Jamaat gathering in Nizamuddin in Delhi in mid-March.

In a meeting with national office bearers Thursday evening,



No provocative remark or statement, he said

Nadda is said to have told them that no party leader should make any provocative or divisive remark but support the efforts of the Prime Minister as well as that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## Gujarat arrests 7 for sharing hate messages

**VAIBHAV JHA**  
AHMEDABAD, APRIL 3

SEVEN PERSONS have been arrested across Gujarat for circulating a message on social media that cited the Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi — which has emerged as a COVID-19 hotspot — to call for social and economic boycott of the minority community.

They have been booked under Section 505 of the IPC (statements conducing to public mischief).

Three more persons have been booked, but haven't been arrested so far.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Yogi orders NSA against 'unruly' Tablighis: What they did is a criminal act

**MAULSHREE SETH & AMIL BHATNAGAR**  
LUCKNOW, GHAZIABAD, APRIL 3

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Friday directed the Ghaziabad administration to invoke the stringent National Security Act against six quarantined members of the Tablighi Jamaat after nurses and medical staff of a Ghaziabad hospital alleged that the men not only refused to maintain social distancing but also misbehaved with them.

"These people will not follow the law, neither will they listen to the administration. They are enemies of humanity. What they did with the female medical staff in the hospital, it is a criminal act. National Security Act is being imposed and the guilty will not be spared," Adityanath said, a day after the Ghaziabad hospital's chief medical superintendent forwarded the staff's complaint to police.

In Madhya Pradesh too, NSA has been slapped on four of seven arrested for attacking a medical team in Tatpatti Bakhhal locality of Indore on Wednesday. The NSA is a stringent law

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## Kerala nurse who cared for elderly couple free of virus, ready for duty



Reshma Mohandas (centre) left hospital in Kottayam, Friday.

**SHAJU PHILIP**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 3

ON FRIDAY, doctors and other health staff at the Kottayam Medical College, Kerala, lined up to give an emotional farewell to Thomas, 93, and his wife Mariamma, 88, one of the oldest couples to fight back COVID-19. Minutes later, another patient walked out of the isolation ward: 32-year-old Reshma Mohandas, one of the nurses who had attended to the couple and who later tested positive for the virus.

On Friday, Reshma, whose samples have since tested negative for the virus, left the hospital

following an 11-day isolation period. It was her first visit home since March 12, when she left for COVID-19 duty at the hospital.

"I was posted at the operation theatre of the hospital. But when the COVID-19 isolation unit was readied at the hospital, I volunteered for duty there. My family was initially unsure when I opted to take care of COVID-19 patients," says Reshma, adding that she managed to convince her husband Unnikrishnan, an engineer.

"Since we were working in the isolation unit, my fellow nurses and I decided it was safer for us to stay together at a hostel," she says.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

**WORLD**



**UK PLANS IMMUNITY PASSPORTS FOR KEY WORKERS**

**HALF THE WORLD ORDERED INDOORS, SPAIN DEATHS SOAR**

PAGE 10

## Political row later, Centre climbs down on J&K order, reserves all jobs for UT domiciles

**NAVEED IQBAL, ADIL AKHZER & LIZ MATHEW**  
SRINAGAR, NEW DELHI, APR 3

TWO DAYS after introducing a new domicile clause redefining residence and recruitment rules for Jammu and Kashmir, the Centre on Friday amended its order to reserve all jobs in the Union Territory for only its domiciles.

The previous order included



Lockdown at Bandipora in north Kashmir. *Shuaib Masoodi*

protections for level 4 jobs with a pay scale not exceeding Rs 25,500.

The move had triggered a row with almost all shades of political opinion questioning its intent and timing, and criticising the Centre for "heaping insult on injury" upon the residents of the UT.

The earlier order of the Ministry of Home Affairs, while providing limited protections for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

**THE EDITORIAL PAGE**

**BLAME TABLIGHIS, NOT MUSLIMS**  
BY JAVED ANAND  
PAGE 6

**INSIDE**

**BLACKLISTING OF TABLIGHI JAMAAT FOREIGNERS: MORE THAN A THIRD CAME FROM INDONESIA**  
PAGE 8

**PAGE 1 ANCHOR**

**PRANAV MUKUL & ANCHAL MAGAZINE**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

IN WHAT clearly indicates supply-side disruptions after states enforced lockdown to stymie the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, wholesale prices of essential commodities, especially vegetables, have shown a sharp increase during the last fortnight of March.

The average countrywide prices of vegetables such as onions and tomatoes, which were softening in the first fortnight of March, recorded a perceptible

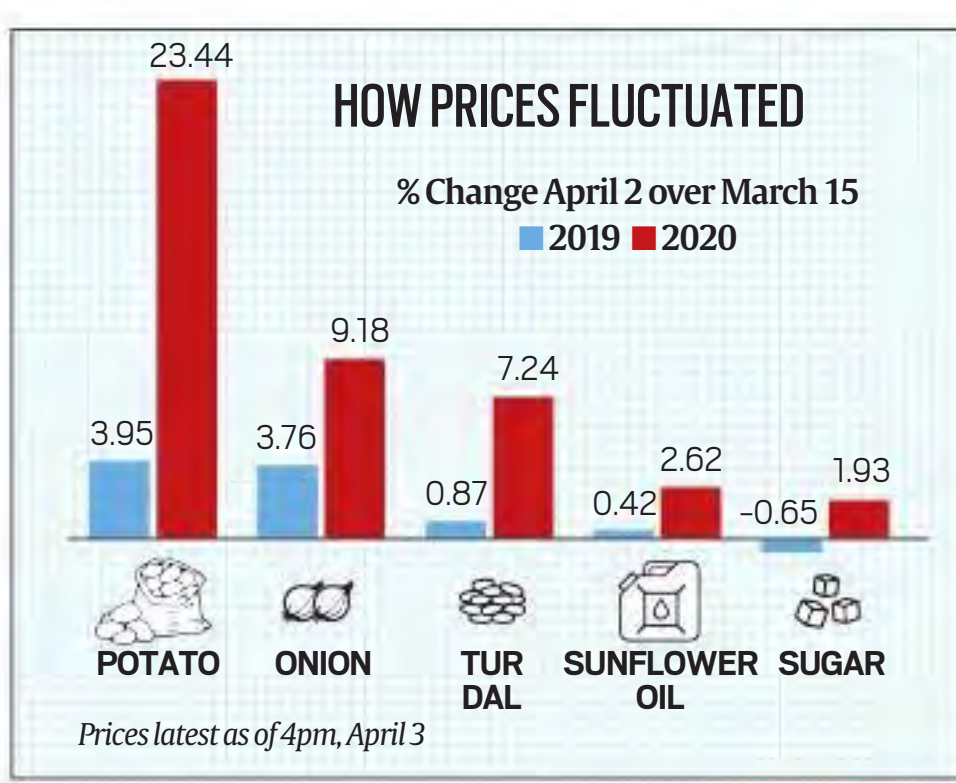
spurt in the second half of the month after March 15 when lockdowns became effective, according to data compiled by the Department of Consumer Affairs.

In the normal scenario, if there are disruptions in supply chains, retail prices increase and wholesale prices drop. But, now, since there is possibly a glut of stocks at one place and goods are not moving, wholesale prices are also showing an increase, economists and agri experts said.

The experts attributed the rise in prices of the essential commodities such as vegetables to purely supply-side issues, instead of production-linked prob-

lems. They also specifically pointed to the lack of transportation and labour to lift stocks from wholesale markets, leading to disruptions in the movement of stocks from production centres to the retail level, even as prices of certain commodities like edible oils have been impacted because of a slowdown in production due to factory closures and labour shortage.

A closer look at the detailed breakup of prices of essential commodities shows that after the drop during early-March, onion prices rose 9 per cent between the first half and second half of March, more than double



**EXPLAINED** Availability low, prices affected

SUPPLY-CHAIN disruptions, and not so much, production related problems, led to volatility and increase in prices of essential items in the first 15 days of March. Stocks lasted at the retail end, but now, lower production due to labour shortage, is affecting both prices and availability.

the rise from last year's level, according to the data. Though the wholesale price of tomatoes is at a lower level than last year, prices shot up by nearly 37 per cent during the March 15-April 3 period to Rs 1,751 a quintal (as on April 3) as against a 3.8 per cent fall during the preceding fortnight.

Prices of potatoes and tomatoes at the wholesale level jumped 37.5 per cent and 46.6 per cent, respectively between March 1 and March 31. At the retail level too, prices have increased sharply during the period. Prices of potatoes increased 30.5 per cent (to Rs 27.59 per kg

on an average) and tomatoes increased by 32.6 per cent (to an average Rs 25.33 a kg). In last three days, the prices did soften.

Also, what has affected consumers is the volatility in prices during the last 20 days, primarily due to sporadic release of supplies. For example, the wholesale prices of perishables such as tomatoes rose 7 per cent on March 27 — the second day of the 21-day lockdown. The third day, the prices fell 1 per cent, only to rise almost 4 per cent on March 9. The prices of both potatoes and tomatoes dropped over the next five days till Friday.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



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WEB EXCLUSIVE TOP 10 FEEL-GOOD MOVIES TO WARD OFF ISOLATION BLUES Here are a few options for you to escape into far more pleasant worlds than the one we have right now. Watch these feel-good movies. VIDEO OF THE DAY CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS How you can mark birthdays during the lockdown CORONAVIRUS EFFECTIVELY USING TWITTER Tips to find credible information and communicate better

EXPRESS AUDIO Why the financial crisis after coronavirus will be unlike any other NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY The crisis that we face due to the coronavirus outbreak is unprecedented. Its impact on our lives will likely remain even after the pandemic is over.

FROM PAGE ONE

Tablighi meet to understand that we are dealing with an infectious disease and one person's failure puts us all back and all our efforts are a waste," Agarwal said. The states from which cases linked to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation have been reported so far are: Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. In Tamil Nadu, State Health Secretary Beela Rajesh said of the 411 cases in the state so far, 364 were linked to the congregation. "A total of 1,200 people who travelled to Delhi in this regard have been tested for COVID-19, 303 people tested negative and the final results are pending," she said. "Our containment zone covers up to 5 km from the potential cases, and a 2 km buffer zone is also being watched regularly by a massive team of health workers," she said. Rajesh said that barring one death in Madurai, all the other patients in the state were stable. "Nobody required critical care... That is a positive sign," she said. With nine deaths being reported across the country in the last 24 hours, the toll has gone up

to 62. Of the total cases, 162 have recovered so far. The last doubling of positive cases, from 606 to 1,251, took five days (March 26-March 31). The epidemic doubling time is an estimate of the speed of spread of a disease and the success of containment measures. In South Korea (10,062 cases), it took 31 days to double; US (2,45,540 cases) took 6 days; and Italy (1,15,242 cases) took 12 days. Meanwhile, testing has picked up with 10,034 samples being tested in the last 24 hours. The total number of samples tested so far is 69,245. The ICMR said 2,653 had tested positive so far. India's daily capacity for testing is about 12,000 samples. ICMR is also finalising the guidelines for the use of serological tests. And, a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Chief Ministers to "formulate a common exit strategy to ensure staggered re-emergence of the population once the lockdown ends" on April 14, a senior Punjab government official said the state was considering extending the lockdown. A Group of Ministers headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh carried out a detailed review of the overall healthcare system and the situation arising out of the 21-day nationwide lockdown, including the supply

of essential commodities. The Defence Ministry said five testing labs at Armed Forces' hospitals are part of the national grid for carrying out COVID-19 tests, and six more are being prepared. In addition, 15 other facilities are being kept ready as standby for use, if required. President Ram Nath Kovind also held a video conference with Governors and Lt Governors on the issue. Light diyas: PM India has been under a 21-day nationwide lockdown since the midnight of March 24 to enforce social distancing in an effort to slow the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes the COVID-19 disease that has now infected over a million people and killed over 54,000 across the world. "Amidst the darkness spread by the Corona pandemic, we must continuously progress towards light and hope. We must continuously strive to take those of us most affected, our poor brothers and sisters, from disappointment to hope," the Prime Minister said. "We must end the darkness and uncertainty by progressing towards light and certainty. We must defeat the deep darkness of the crisis, by spreading the glory of light in all four directions. "And that is why", Modi said, "this Sunday, on the 5th of April, we must all together, challenge the darkness spread by the corona crisis, introducing it to the power of light. On this 5th of April, we must awaken the superpower of 130 crore Indians. We must take the super resolve of 130 crore Indians to even greater heights." "I want 9 minutes from all you, at 9pm," the PM said. "Listen carefully, on the 5th of April, at 9 pm, turn off all the lights in your homes, stand at your doors or in your balconies, and light candles or diyas, torches or mobile flashlights for 9 minutes." If all Indians do this, "we will experience the superpower of light, clearly illuminating the common purpose we are all fighting for," he said. "In that light, in that lustre, in that radiance, let us resolve in our minds that we are not alone, that no one is alone! 130 crore Indians are committed, through a common resolve!" However, the PM cautioned, "no one must assemble or gather anywhere while participating in this programme". He asked people not to go out in the street or in their neighbourhoods, and to remain at their own doorstep or balconies. "One must never cross the 'Lakshman Rekha' of social distancing. Social distancing should not be breached under any circumstances. This is the only panacea to break the chain of coronavirus," Modi said. During the Janata Curfew,

people had come out on the roads in groups at some places, dancing and raising slogans, defeating the very purpose of the lockdown. Modi, however, said that "the manner in which (people) had expressed gratitude to all those fighting against the coronavirus on March 22 has today become an example for all countries", and "many are replicating it now". Speaking on the tenth day of the lockdown, the Prime Minister lauded as "unprecedented" the "discipline and spirit of service" that Indians had displayed during this period. It had deepened the belief that the nation can unite as one against a crisis, he said. "Today, when crores of people of this country are confined to their homes, it will be natural for anyone to question what they can do just by themselves. Some people may also be worried about how they are going to fight such a big battle on their own," Modi said. "Many will be concerned about how many more days they will have to spend like this." However, despite being confined to their homes, no Indian was alone at this time, Modi said. "The collective strength of 130 crore Indians is with each one of us, it is the strength of each one of us. It is required for our countrymen to, from time to time, experience the greatness, majesty and divinity of this collective strength." In India, "the citizenry is considered a manifestation of God itself", the Prime Minister said. "Therefore, when the nation is fighting such a huge battle, one should from time to time keep experiencing this collective superpower manifesting itself in the form of the people. This experience boosts our morale, gives us direction and clarity, a common aim as well as the energy to pursue the same." Hate messages Police said the accused were residents of Navsari, Jamnagar, Amreli, Anand and Kutch districts. In Amreli, Riken Singhav, a 27-year-old employee of a private firm, was arrested. "The accused has been booked under IPC Section 505 for public mischief, as well as under the Disaster Management Act," said Niripati Rai, SP, Amreli. In Navsari, the accused have been identified as Umakant Rathod (50) and Ratilal Patel (70). Police said both had shared the message on different WhatsApp groups. S G Rana, Deputy SP, Navsari, said: "Umakant works as a diamond polisher, Ratilal is not employed." Both were released on bail on Friday. The others who have been arrested are: Paras Vala (39), a driver, and Jayanti Giri (51), a businessman, in Jamnagar; Nirav Barwadi (30), a private firm employee in Anand, and Hareshsinh (42) in Kutch. On Thursday, the Ahmedabad Police Special Branch, in a letter to police stations in the city, had warned about a hate message being circulated on WhatsApp regarding the Tablighi Jamaat congregation, and asked police to take all steps to prevent any untoward incident. Saying that an inquiry had been launched, Ahmedabad City Police Commissioner Ashish Bhatia said "action will be taken against the persons who circulated the message." Relief in hotspot reported on March 19 at a private hospital where a doctor tested positive. Soon, the hospital became an epicentre of the outbreak with around 17 people, all of them hospital staff and patients, testing positive by March 26. The outbreak emerged as a massive crisis for the Rajasthan government as the doctors, before testing positive, had communicated with a long list of people, including nursing staff and patients. But on Friday, officials said the last person to test positive in the district was a 40-year-old OPD patient of the hospital on March 30. The district had also witnessed two deaths — of patients aged 73 and 60, respectively — in the fortnight since the first case was reported. However, the state government has maintained that the cause of death was not COVID-19 but underlying medical conditions, such as kidney failure and high blood pressure, for which they were already undergoing treatment. To control the outbreak, the district administration imposed a "complete curfew" and, with the health department, launched a massive drive to track all the people who had come in contact with the infected doctors and other staff of the private hospital. By March 22, a list of 498 people from five states — Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat — was compiled. These were patients who had visited the hospital for treatment since the time when the staff got infected. Official documents show that in the next five days — between March 22 and 27 — 4.35 lakh houses and 22 lakh people of Bhilwara, which has an estimated population of 30 lakh, were surveyed. The March 26 report notes that 6,445 people, who were suspected to have been infected, were kept at home quarantine. "After the screening, we continued to track the suspected persons with influenza-like symptoms through the help of geographical information system (GIS) as well," said ACS Singh.

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CLARIFICATIONS & CORRECTIONS ON 03.04.20, PAGE 1

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# 3 THE OUTBREAK THE CITY

## 3 from Markaz gathering test positive in Nuh

SAKSHI DAYAL  
GURGAON, APRIL 3

MARKING THE first instance of the coronavirus epidemic in Haryana's Nuh district, three people who attended the Tablighi Jamaat gathering in Nizamuddin last month tested positive Friday. Officials have traced over 250 people, who had visited the Nizamuddin area, in the district so far.

According to officials, samples of these three people were among the nine that had been sent for testing after they developed symptoms on Wednesday night. "Three of the nine samples sent for testing have returned positive today; results of the remaining are negative. All three hail from Kerala and had attended the Jamaat gathering at Nizamuddin," said Nuh Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Virender Yadav.

Officials said the three were among a group of 13 who had left Nizamuddin together on March 19. They had first gone to Palwal, where they spent 10 days before arriving in Nuh on March 30. "On March 30, they had stayed at a masjid in Nuh, where we traced them on March 31 and put them in quarantine. Since their samples are positive, we have traced 16 of their contacts and also sent their samples for testing. They have been quarantined," said the CMO.

Of the 16 contacts, 10 travelled with them till Nuh, two are staff of the masjid where they stayed on the night of March 30, and the remaining four are people who left the Markaz building in Nizamuddin along with them and travelled till Palwal.

Officials of the Mevat district administration said a total of 195



Outside the Nizamuddin Markaz. Praveen Khanna

Indians from different parts of the country and 57 foreign citizens, who had gone for the Jamaat gathering, have been traced in the district so far.

Meanwhile, in Gurgaon, with no new cases being recorded on Friday, the district has a total of six active cases. Although no new cases had emerged in the district in eight days prior to Thursday, five cases emerged late Thursday night, including a resident of Devi Lal colony in the district who had attended the Nizamuddin gathering.

Apart from him, a 45-year-old man, who works in Mumbai and had recently returned to Gurgaon, and his father also tested positive on Thursday. The family lives in Sector 54. The two others who tested positive are a nurse at a private hospital, who lives in Jharsa, and a Sector 47 resident who had travelled to Italy last month.

The district has so far recorded 15 cases, of which nine people have recovered. A total of 647 samples have been sent for testing so far, of which results of 572 have returned negative, while those of 15 have returned positive. Results of the remaining samples are awaited.

The Deputy Commissioner Friday also declared ESI Hospital in Sector 9A as a COVID Hospital.

## TABLIGHI GATHERING FORMS MAJORITY OF CORONAVIRUS CASES IN DELHI 93 new cases, 2 deaths, CM says local transmission under control

'If we don't follow lockdown strictly, we will not even come to know when the disease will spread'

ASTHA SAXENA & MALLICA JOSHI  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

DELHI SAW 93 new cases of COVID-19 on Friday, with two people dying of the disease. This takes the death toll from the virus in the city to six. Most of the cases, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said, were from among those who went to the Nizamuddin Markaz gathering last month. Of the 386 COVID-19 cases in Delhi, 259 are linked to the Markaz gathering.

The two victims are a 74-year-old man from East Delhi and a 70-year-old man from Tamil Nadu. The former was brought dead to a private hospital on Thursday. The latter died at AIIMS Jhajjar after being moved there from Nizamuddin on Tuesday.

"He tested positive for COVID-19 but had other comorbidities, including uncontrolled diabetes," said Dr D K Sharma, medical superintendent of the hospital, about the 70-year-old. On the East Delhi resident, a health official said: "He had fever for the past few days so as a precautionary measure, his family got him tested and the results came back positive. We have traced those who were living with him."

His 32-year-old daughter and two-year-old granddaughter lived with him at his residence in IP Extension. His wife was in Shahdara and has been quarantined there. "We are trying to find out how he contracted it. He had no travel history, but since he was on dialysis, his immunity

### TRACKING THE CASES

**386** Cases till date  
**93** Cases today

**77** Markaz-related cases today  
**16** Others  
**2** Deaths today  
**6** Total deaths

**OF TOTAL PATIENTS**  
**58** have a history of international travel  
**259** related to Markaz gathering  
**38** Local transmission cases  
**31** still under investigation

**RELIEF OPERATIONS**  
Food distribution centres **1,780**  
Capacity to feed 10 lakh people per meal

**ON FRIDAY**  
**6,52,750** ate lunch  
**6,30,000** ate dinner

**328 SHELTERS TO STAY**  
Capacity **57,280**  
Occupancy **11,442**

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was weak," said the official. "So far, a possible link is that the deceased's sister-in-law lives in Shahdara had visited the family a few days ago. Shahdara is close to Dilshad Garden, which is a coronavirus hotspot in Delhi.

We are investigating further," added the official. On the cases inching towards 400, the CM said: "These figures are worrisome at first glance but when we look at the background of the cases, we see that cases of

local transmission — disease spreading from a known infected person to another — are still low." Apart from the Markaz gathering, of the 386 cases so far, 58 have a history of foreign travel. Many of them are not from

## Man calls cops on father for violating lockdown

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

POLICE HAVE registered an FIR against a 59-year-old man after his son called them to say his father was not following the lockdown and was roaming outside. In his complaint, Abhishek Singh (30) said: "Despite the lockdown, my father steps out of the house regularly. He leaves around 8 am and walks on the main road."

Singh lives with his family in Rajokri and works at an automobile store in Wazirpur.

Police said they visited the house and found the man and his father arguing outside. "Abhishek was trying to convince his father to come inside the house, but the latter refused. We recorded the complainant's statement and filed an FIR against his father at Vasant Kunj police station on April 1," said an officer.

Police have filed 34 FIRs against people — with 21 in Dwarka — for violating home quarantine. Most of the FIRs have been registered against people who were advised to remain at home, but were seen roaming on the streets.



## JAMA MASJID, FRIDAY

Security personnel outside the Jama Masjid. Devotees were urged to offer Friday prayers at their homes in view of the coronavirus outbreak. Abhinav Saha

## RSS starts helplines for students, those from North East

ABHINAV RAJPUT  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

THE RSS HAS started helplines for students, the differently abled and people from the North East living in the capital, to reach out if they face difficulties or discrimination during the coronavirus crisis.

The helpline for those from the North East will be staffed by volunteers from the region. Last month, a woman from Manipur had alleged that a man spat on her and called her "corona" in Delhi. He was later arrested.

The North East Forum for International Solidarity had written to the Home Ministry, asking that those discriminating against people from the region be dealt with strongly. The body alleged that two North Eastern students had been attacked near Delhi University on March 3, and called 'coronavirus'.

For the helpline, 9650530531, a total of 21 volunteers have been roped in, and more than 100 calls have been received within three days.

Most calls are regarding help procuring ration, medical advice and gas cylinder refills, said

Pawan Kumar, member, state executive, RSS.

Families from the region have also been calling to seek help for their children stuck in Delhi during the lockdown, said an RSS member.

Kumar said that if people are in need of medical assistance, doctors will be asked to attend to them. "We have a team of 10 doctors who will assist them and tell them what steps they need to take in each case," said Kumar.

RSS has also started another helpline, Yuva, for students in Delhi. The number is 8800868686.

"Many students live in paying guest and rented accommodation in areas such as Mukherjee Nagar, Karol Bagh, Satya Niketan and Rajinder Nagar. Many are facing a shortage of food... In such a situation, we reach out to them with relief material," said Yuva's Delhi state convener, Rajneesh Jindal.

He said the helpline has received more than 1,200 calls in the past three days. For the differently abled who need help, RSS has started 8010066066 as a helpline number. It has received 300 calls so far.

## NO WAY TO SELL PRODUCE, MANY LOSE MEANS OF INCOME

# For farmers on Yamuna floodplains, city markets are so near yet so far

ANAND MOHAN J  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

ON THE banks of the Yamuna on Wednesday, the silence is broken by a voice from a radio hanging outside a straw hut: "Listen to the government. We have to stay inside our homes for 21 days. 21st Century India needs 21 days..."

The hut belongs to Lotan Chaudhary (50), a farmer living on the Yamuna floodplains near Chilla village. Switching off the radio and tending to his goat, he says: "This goat gives us milk. When everything runs out, there will always be milk."

The impact of the 21-day lockdown due to the coronavirus outbreak has reverberated through the floodplains, home to several hundred families who mostly grow vegetables for local markets in East Delhi.

Over the last two weeks, most of their crop has rotted away as they were unable to sell it in markets. Ram Chander Mahal (35) had grown brinjals on his two bighas of land and was expecting to sell it at Rs 40 per kg. "For 11 days, I waited to sell my brinjals; they are rotten now. I only have some left for my family," he says.

Most farmers had grown spinach, fenugreek, coriander,

cauliflower and brinjal.

Ramesh (51), another farmer, says he didn't eat for two days until a Delhi Police constable gave him a packet of puris. "I am now going to grow okra. It will take me three months, that is the only problem. Zyada time nahi hai," he says.

Even though many houses are equipped with a hand pump, the water is not fit for consumption. Many residents walk till Ashok Nagar to fetch water and, if fortunate, some packets of food that are being distributed.

Vikas Mandal (24) woke up at 6 am and took over seven hours to fill four cans of water at Ashok Nagar and return home.



Over the last two weeks, most of the crop has rotted away as farmers were unable to sell it in markets. Amit Mehra

"I was hungry yesterday. At Ashok Nagar, they said not to worry about food (as it was being distributed in packets there)... But my family should not die of thirst," he says.

To get basic supplies, residents have to walk for over an hour, navigating through the lush green fields and through several police checkpoints, before they reach local markets in Chilla village.

Around 2 pm, two men, residents of Chilla village, reach the floodplains on a bike and distribute puris wrapped in newspaper. One of the men, Rakesh, says, "Apne log hain toh aa gaye, warna koi nahi poochta."

On the other hand, Rishipal (57), who has set up a milk shop on the floodplains, is seeing brisk business. He sold 26 litres of milk since morning for sale in Delhi.

"I can't sell it here because these people can't afford it," he says. A little further down, near the Mayur Vihar flyover, around 200 ragpickers live on the river bank. A group of women squat under the shade of a tree, picking empty liquor bottles, while men sort through electric waste. They are waiting for the curfew to lift so they can sell the garbage to dealers in Nangloi. They had been banking on fish sellers to come with their boats and sell fish.

At the far end of the bank, Vijay Kumar (34), a fisherman, stands atop a wooden boat watching his children play.

He used to spend two hours in the night setting his trap, and would collect the fish in the morning. On a good day he would earn Rs 1,000, half of which he would give to the owner of the boat. "Police curfew hai. Kahi nahi jaa sakte," says Kumar, who has been surviving on packets of rajma chawal.

But there are a few who dare to break the curfew. A group of fishermen playing cards proudly show off their catch — four catfishes — in a small bucket nearby. "Bhookha nahi marunga, ye mera wada hai," says a fisherman.



# 4 THE OUTBREAK THE CITY

12 HEALTH OFFICERS HAVE CONTRACTED THE VIRUS

## Doctor at private hospital, three nurses test positive for COVID-19

ASTHA SAXENA  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

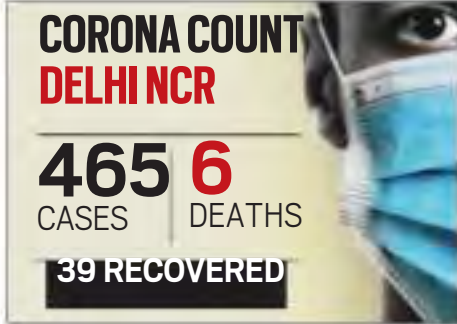
A DOCTOR working in the ICU ward of a private hospital, a nursing orderly at a government hospital and two nurses at the state-run cancer institute are among four healthcare workers who tested positive for COVID-19 in the city Friday. At least 12 healthcare workers in Delhi have tested positive so far.

While the two nurses came in contact with a 34-year-old resident doctor at the Delhi State Cancer Institute (DSCI) who had tested positive earlier, health officials suspect the other two may have contracted the infection from patients.

At Maharaja Agrasen hospital, a 38-year-old doctor was quarantined on March 30 after a woman from Rohtak, who was admitted to the ICU from March 10 to 30, tested positive. She left the hospital against medical advice. "Around 10 medical staff have been quarantined," said a senior doctor from the hospital.

At Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital, a 25-year-old nursing orderly tested positive. "He (the nursing orderly) has been quarantined and around 30 workers, in addition to his family, were tested; all of them tested negative. He has been isolated at home," said Dr AK Mehta, medical superintendent of the hospital.

Delhi reported 93 new cases till Friday evening, taking the to-



tal number of cases to 386. The death toll climbed to six, with two deaths being reported Friday.

The cancer institute has collected samples of around 50 staff members, of whom 20 are symptomatic. The other members have been advised home isolation as they were asymptomatic. "In the first phase, we had collected samples of 17 staff members. Of them, two nurses – a man and a woman in their 40s – tested positive," said

a senior doctor from the institute.

The resident doctor from the department of preventive oncology who tested positive had last visited the hospital on March 21. According to sources, his brother and sister-in-law had come from Europe last month and the hospital is linking their travel history with his case.

The hospital shut its OPD Wednesday for sanitisation, and it will remain closed for a few more days. "We have cancer patients with weak immune systems. We can't take a risk," said the doctor.

At Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Hospital (SVBPH), 11 healthcare workers from the department of pediatrics have been quarantined after a 32-year-old doctor from the department tested positive on

Tuesday. His wife, a resident doctor in the department of biochemistry at Safdarjung Hospital, also tested positive for the disease. The couple, residents of South Delhi, had travelled to UK in the first week of March.

"Apart from the 11 doctors and nurses, four other doctors who were in contact with the 32-year-old doctor had given samples for testing. Their reports are negative," said Dr Rajeev Kapoor, medical superintendent of SVBPH.

On Thursday, a resident doctor at AIIMS and his wife, who gave birth to a boy Friday, tested positive for COVID-19. A resident doctor at Safdarjung Hospital, two mohalla clinic doctors and a doctor working in a private clinic have also tested positive.

## Day after testing positive, wife of AIIMS doc gives birth to a boy

ASTHA SAXENA  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

AMID THE coronavirus pandemic, doctors at AIIMS ended their day on an upbeat note as a nine-month pregnant COVID-19 patient gave birth to a healthy baby boy Friday evening at the institute.

This is the first baby to be born from a COVID-19 positive mother in Delhi.

The woman is the wife of a senior resident doctor working in the department of physiology at AIIMS. The couple had tested positive for the virus Thursday. On Friday, the doctor's brother also tested positive for the disease.

The isolation ward where the 29-year-old mother was admitted for treatment was converted into an operation theatre and a team of 10 doctors was deputed to deal with the case.

She is also the first pregnant woman in Delhi to be tested positive for COVID-19 and doctors said the delivery was early by a week.

"Both the mother and the baby are healthy. The baby was delivered a week early, through C-section. At present, the infant

has been kept with the mother since he will require breastfeeding. So far, there is no evidence that the infection can be transmitted through breastfeeding. While the mother has tested positive for COVID-19, she is asymptomatic. We will be collecting samples of the infant too," said a senior doctor from AIIMS.

The country's top medical institute has already prepared a protocol on how to deal with pregnant women who have tested positive for the virus.

A 38-page document prepared by the medical institute has one page dedicated to the care of pregnant women patients.

As per the World Health Organisation, women with COVID-19 can breastfeed if they wish to do so, but with necessary precautions.

The guidelines state that women should practice respiratory hygiene during feeding; wear a mask where available; wash hands before and after touching the baby; and routinely clean and disinfect surfaces they have touched. It also says that the mother can touch and come in close contact with the newborn.

### Hospital WhatsApp group on police radar

New Delhi: To prevent spread of fake news or rumours on social media or at hospitals, authorities at Vardhman Mahavir Medical College and Safdarjung Hospital have issued an order asking the admins of WhatsApp groups within the hospital to submit their information to police. The order was signed by Addl Medical Superintendent Dr Prem Kumar on Friday. Staff have been instructed to give names, phone numbers and email IDs of all admins to police.

### 22 resthouses in Ghaziabad

Ghaziabad: The Ghaziabad administration has made 22 resthouses for travellers from other states who are stuck in the region since the lockdown. "In one of the resthouses inaugurated on Friday, more than 100 labourers from Odisha are being given shelter and food. They are being managed by administration, Nagar Nigam and other bodies... Medical teams are carrying out daily checks," said Ajay Shankar Pandey, DM Ghaziabad. **ENS**

## 11 cops shave their heads after Markaz operation

New Delhi: At least 11 police personnel who were a part of the team that evacuated 2,361 people from the Nizamuddin Markaz building have shaved their heads, in the belief that it might protect them from coronavirus. Seven police personnel posted with the Hazrat Nizamuddin police station meanwhile were sent on a two-week home quarantine.

"I was part of the evacuation team responsible for sending them away in buses. We heard that coronavirus sticks to your hair for around two weeks, so we decided to shave our heads," said a constable, who did not want to be named. The men have been posted at Nizamuddin police

station for over two years. Earlier, Delhi Police Commissioner S N Shrivastava had ordered that 25%-33% of the force will remain in home quarantine for a period of 10 days on rotation. He had said that preference should be given to personnel above 50 years of age and those with medical conditions.

The seven police personnel were working until Thursday evening, after which they were sent on home quarantine. Senior officers said it is a routine rotation. "So far, 24 police personnel have been sent on leave from Nizamuddin police station. Roads leading to the police station are also blocked," a senior officer said. **ENS**



### BOXED IN

A policeman paints on a road outside a bank at Lajpat Nagar on Friday to earmark space for customers to stand. *Praveen Khanna*

## FROM PAGE ONE

### J&K

level 4 jobs, had opened up all other government posts to anyone from the rest of the country.

Level four jobs include the lower constabulary, junior assistants and entry level non-gazetted jobs.

The earlier order extended the definition of domicile to children of central government officials, all India services 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 central government who "have served in Jammu and Kashmir for a total period of ten years, or children of parents who fulfil any of the conditions in sections".

This part has been changed to "shall have served" in J&K.

Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP) president Altaf Bukhari met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval in New Delhi on Friday and told them that the "new order is not in the interest of J&K residents". "The concern for us now is the limited job reservation for J&K residents in the new domicile rules. It has been conveyed to them (the Centre) that the new rules are not at all in the interest of the people, and need modification," a senior JKAP leader privy to the meetings told The Indian Express.

"A positive response has been received from Home Minister and the NSA after the matter was raised with them," the leader said.

The new rule defined a domicile as someone "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".

Before the removal of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2019, Article 35A of the Constitution of India (now abrogated) empowered the (erstwhile) state Assembly to define a resident of J&K, who alone were eligible to apply for jobs or own immovable

property.

Another JKAP leader said: "It is very important for the party to get the order modified. Residents of J&K are fuming about this new order and they are blaming us."

Following meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Shah last month, JKAP leaders had said that they were assured of protection for domicile rights.

Reacting to the late night order on Friday, senior JKAP leader Ashraf Mir told *The Indian Express*, "Nothing comes on a platter. You have to assert, then only will you be successful. We will do everything for the good of the people."

### Nadda cautions

of state governments irrespective of which party is in power there, said a source.

"There was already a direction that we have a great responsibility of leading the nation. The virus and the disease have made everyone vulnerable across the world, of all faiths, no one should issue any statements or remarks that are provocative," said a senior leader who participated in the meeting.

"This was reiterated when the Tablighi issue came up. There is a directive that no one should make it a communal issue. Only leaders of the minority community can comment on that if they wish to. We have to be united in our fight against the virus," the leader added.

This is significant given that many supporters of the party, especially on social media, cited the outbreak to fuel campaigns like "CoronaJihad" and "Markaz Conspiracy."

On April 1, BJPIT cell head Amit Malviya tweeted: "Delhi's dark underbelly is exploding! Last 3 months have seen an Islamic insurrection of sorts, first in the name of anti-CAA protests from Shaheen Bagh to Jamia, Jaffrabad to Seelampur. And now the illegal gathering of the radical Tablighi Jamaat at the markaz. It needs a fix!"

Tweeted Union Minister and BJP leader Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi: "Talibani Crime by Tablighi Jamaat. This is not a negligence. It's a serious criminal act. When the entire country is fighting united

against Corona, such a sin is unpardonable."

Goa Chief Minister and BJP leader Pramod Sawant said that "the outfit (Tablighi Jamaat) had damaged India."

At Nadda's meeting, the party took a stand that a "united front" was needed in the fight against corona. "State units have been asked to support the efforts made by the respective governments and follow instructions issued by them instead of violating them," said another source. "For example, Kerala is ruled by our bitter rivals, but the instruction given to the state unit is to cooperate with the CPM-led government," a source added.

This calibration comes in the wake of protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens and the communal riots in north-east Delhi during the visit of US President Donald Trump which dented the government's image. The party leadership, sources said, did not want the current "human crisis" to take any such divisive or political turn.

### Kerala nurse

Reshma soon found herself on duty as one of the nurses in charge of the elderly couple, who are believed to have got the infection from their son and his family, who were visiting them from Italy. Five others from the couple's family – their son, daughter-in-law, grandson and two other relatives – tested positive for the virus. They have since been cleared of COVID-19 and discharged from hospital.

"Initially, the elderly couple were in separate rooms. Later, our seniors decided that it would be better for them to be together since they were getting anxious. They were totally bed-ridden and had a lot of age-related illness and underlying diseases. Thomas was often ill-tempered, probably because of his age and his illness. I didn't mind, really. I would simply think of them as my parents and ignore what he said. Sometimes he would refuse to eat or ask for his favourite food. We had to deal with him very patiently," she laughs.

"Mariyamma also has age-related hearing loss, so I would often have to come close to her for her to hear what I was saying. That probably exposed me to the

virus," adds Reshma.

On March 23, when she came down with fever, Reshma went into isolation. "My colleagues who had come in contact with me also went into isolation. They are still in isolation. It's really worrying when one of us gets infected... really affects your morale. But whenever I speak to them, I try to lift their spirits, saying we will all emerge stronger from this. On the eleventh day of isolation, I tested negative," she says.

Congratulating Reshma on COVID-free status, Health Minister K K Shailaja, in her Facebook post, said: "...Reshma has shown that Kerala will survive COVID-19," said the minister.

Meanwhile, Reshma, who has to remain in isolation at home for the next 14 days, says she expressed her willingness to work in the same COVID-19 isolation ward once she resumes duty.

### IIT, IIM

for campus recruitment) re-questing them not to rescind placement offers made for the academic year 2019-20.

On Friday, IIT-Delhi director Ramgopal Rao issued a public appeal to all recruiters. Rao argued that since all IITs strictly follow the equal opportunity principle (one candidate, one job), withdrawing an offer would mean students "will end up not having any job right now".

"We all understand these are difficult times. But please be considerate to keep your promises. A few months of delay may be fine. Please do not complicate the lives of these brightest children in an already complex environment. If at all, they are capable of getting you out of recession faster than you can imagine," he wrote in his appeal shared on social media.

On March 30, IIT-Kanpur director Abhay Karandikar assured support to graduating students affected by rescinded offers. "I understand that some companies have withdrawn job offers. We will arrange a special placement drive in July/August time frame once the situation returns to normal. We will also tap our vast network of IITK alumni, who, I am sure, will come forward to help all of you," Karandikar wrote in his email to all students.

Whether Rao's appeal and Karandikar's assurance translates into anything substantive isn't clear. Both IIT-Delhi and IIT-Kanpur have decided to conduct an exclusive placement drive for students who have lost their job offers.

"We are watchful of the situation and are aware of the possibility that because of COVID-19 (outbreak) some (companies) may withdraw their offers. A few companies have already come back to our placement office to discuss offers made by them. Given the (economic) situation, these companies don't know what they should do," said a senior professor of IIM-Bangalore.

To help students affected by the last-minute withdrawals, IIM-Bangalore will reach out to recruiters, who were interested in participating in the placement drive this year but were turned away, to check if they are still keen on hiring.

Incidentally, the US consulting firm that withdrew offers this week, was among the companies that participated in the placement drive at IIM-Bangalore this year.

"All of us are worried. It will be chaotic," said the director of a second-generation IIM on the condition of anonymity, when asked whether he expects the pandemic to affect the final placement offers. "Moreover, if companies start cutting salaries (of existing employees), we'll be fooling ourselves to think that our students will not be affected by those decisions."

"In my experience, international companies, especially those based in the US, take such decisions (on withdrawing offers) faster. I am sure we will see an impact. Indian companies take a little longer to decide (on such matters). Some of our best students are picked up first by global firms. It will be ironic if such students are left behind," this director added.

While the IITs have taken preemptive action and reached out to the employers requesting them not to withdraw offers, the IIMs are being more cautious. "I think it will be an overreach on our part to speak to companies at this moment," said a senior officer in the administration of IIM-Ahmedabad.

"It (outbreak) will affect (placements), but we don't know exactly how. Currently, we expect companies to defer the date of joining till June-July. Given the current circumstances, that should be fine," the officer said, adding that he doesn't expect cancellation at this moment.

But even in case of the IITs that are currently negotiating with the US consulting firm, a director admits there's not much one can do to change such decisions. "Placement is not an entitlement but a critical aspect. We can engage with the companies, but there's only so much we can say to them. Deferring date of joining (instead of cancelling offer) can be our negotiating ground. We cannot force them to hire students. It's a Force Majeure situation that everyone's facing," Rao said.

Although six of the institute's graduating students are among the first to face the brunt of the sputtering global economy, IIM-Calcutta is confident more placement offers will not get affected.

### Price rise

Prices for pulses have risen 5-8 per cent during March 15-April 3, for sugar by nearly 2 per cent, and for milk and loose tea prices at wholesale 2.4 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively, data showed.

Producers point to low capacity utilisation at plants. "At present, most of our plants are working to meet the demand. However, we are running them with low capacity due to low availability of manpower... The supply of products is smooth right now. We are also taking help of railway rakes. However, lean availability of labourers is becoming a hurdle. To cope with it, we are using automated loading to some extent. We are ensuring products get delivered to our depots and from there distributed locally as per the situation there," said Anshu Mallick, Deputy CEO, Adani Wilmar. The company sells flour, rice and edible oil under the Fortune brand.

Wholesale price trends depend on movement of goods to consumption points. "Vegetables are daily essentials. Everyone needs that every day. If supplies are disrupted, whatever limited

### Activities for students through SMS

New Delhi: The Delhi government Friday began learning activities for its students from kindergarten to Class VIII by sending them projects through SMS on their parents' phones. Schools have been closed since March 13 and will remain

closed for the duration of the lockdown.

On Friday, activities sent to children included kindergarten students being asked to identify vegetables cooked in their homes that day and draw and colour them. **ENS**

## 2 SP workers killed in Gonda, BJP leader held; NSA invoked

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, APRIL 3

A SAMAJWADI Party (SP) leader and his supporter were killed in a clash with a group led by a BJP leader in Gonda district's Paraaspatti village Friday evening.

The victims were identified as Devendra Pratap Singh alias Lathi Singh, 52, and 30-year-old Kanhaiya Pathak. The police have arrested 11 people, including BJP leader Atul Singh, and invoked the National Security Act for shooting the SP leader, and injuring four. District BJP chief Surya Narayan Tiwari confirmed to *The Indian Express* that Atul Singh was a leader of his party.

Devendra Singh, a former village head, had sought an investigation into the MGNREGA works going on in the area. Atul Singh is a zilla parishad member, and his mother is the current village chief.

"Around 5 pm on Friday, a team of MGNREGA officials came to investigate," Umri Begumganj Station House Officer (SHO) Om Prakash Chauhan. "When officials were conducting inquiry, there was a clash between people belonging to the camp of Devendra Pratap Singh and Atul Singh."

Superintendent of Police Raj Karan Nayyar said it had been alleged that the BJP leader had started firing. The injured, among them former Lucknow University student leader Vijay Singh alias Titu, were admitted to the district hospital.

The SHO claimed prima facie it appeared that the BJP leader's camp had fired the shots in retaliation against the SP leader for seeking the investigation into the village administration.

The Superintendent of Police said NSA was invoked against the accused on Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's instructions.

The Chief Minister also warned the district magistrate and Nayyar over the incident, asking them how it occurred during the lockdown. "The CM has expressed condolences to the family members of the deceased," the government said in a statement.

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



# 5 THE OUTBREAK NATION



## FACTS & FAUX PAS

TRIPURA Chief Minister Biplab Deb on Thursday explained why the state government had sealed its borders with neighbouring states. Only, he got much of the geography and statistics all wrong. In a video clip that has gone viral, Deb is seen telling a reporter that he had no choice but to seal the borders since neighbouring areas of Assam's Karimganj district had 16 confirmed coronavirus cases and Manipur had 19. While Assam indeed has recorded 16 positive cases, Karimganj has recorded only one. Besides, as against Deb's count, Manipur has reported two cases so far. More: Tripura does not share a boundary with Manipur. Deb's statement prompted Manipur Congress spokesperson Ningombam Meitei to tweet and ask the Tripura CM to check his facts before making statements.

## TOO EAGER

AT AROUND 4.30 pm, the PIB Fact Check handle on Twitter asked people not to fall for "rumours/unscientific reasoning" circulating on the Prime Minister's appeal to light candles or diyas at 9 pm on April 5. This, however, could very well apply to a government departments itself, after MyGov earlier in the day sent out a video of a senior doctor claiming that the request was based on "Yoga Vashishta", which apparently means that if "people think collectively that coronavirus should not form on our ACE 2 receptors, then collective consciousness will make sure that this happens". Senior MyGov officials said officials in charge of the handle posted the doctor's message taken in by his credentials—a former president of the Indian Medical Association and a Padma Shri awardee in 2010. The post was soon deleted, but by then the damage was done, the video having been saved, shared, and talked about, much to the government department's embarrassment.

## LAN DOWN

A HEARING in the Supreme Court via video-conferencing was repeatedly disrupted on Friday, apparently due to problems with the Local Area Network (LAN). The bench finally had to hear some of the lawyers through a WhatsApp video call. The apex court is learnt to have conveyed its disillusionment with senior officials of MTNL.

## Punjab mulls extending curfew beyond April 14

KANCHAN VASDEV  
CHANDIGARH, APRIL 3

THE PUNJAB government is mulling extending the curfew in the state even after the court-wide lockdown to check the spread of coronavirus gets over on April 14. Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Friday said the decision on curfew extension would be taken in light of prevailing situation around that time. Sources, meanwhile, told *The Indian Express* that officials across districts have been told to be prepared for an extension in curfew restrictions if things take turn for the worse.

"But the announcement would come at the right time as at this juncture, it would only add to panic in the state," said a state government functionary. The need for extra caution

comes as Punjab approaches the harvesting of wheat from April 14. The state is also preparing for a massive wheat procurement operation from April 15. In this case, commission agents, labourers and all other paraphernalia associated with the process would be out and about. In such a scenario, it would be advisable to not let all the residents out, said sources.

Sources said the state had also witnessed return of migrant labourers after the borders were sealed. Government functionaries feel that curfew was the only option to keep them confined to their homes.

The state has recorded 53 positive cases and five deaths. The government is also closely watching if there is a multiplication of COVID-19 cases in the state after the influx of participants from Delhi's Tablighi Jamaat event to the state.

## MHA to states: Can't define all necessities

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

WITH OBSTRUCTION to essential supplies continuing despite repeated reminders from the Centre, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has written to all states and pointed out that each item cannot be defined, so states must allow manufacturing and transport of all groceries and food items as generally understood.

The MHA also clarified that laboratories, including those for testing COVID-19 samples, are exempt from lockdown restrictions.

In a letter to all state chief secretaries, Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla wrote: "At the ground level, different interpretations are being made on items given exceptions, which hinder smooth flow of supply chain of these essential items.... Queries have been received as to what constitutes food and grocery. Since it is neither feasible nor desirable to mention each item of



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah chair a meeting of a group of ministers on COVID-19. ANI

## EMPOWERED GROUP OF OFFICERS' MEET

# 20-30,000 ventilators lying dysfunctional, officers told

HARIKISHAN SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

BETWEEN 20,000 and 30,000 ventilators may be lying dysfunctional across the country—in both public and private sector hospitals—either for want of parts or servicing, it emerged during a meeting of one of the 11 empowered group of officers tasked with different aspects of coordinating response to the coronavirus pandemic.

According to sources, the issue figured during a meeting of the empowered group of officers on Wednesday chaired by the NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant. A dozen senior representatives of industry chamber Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) were among those who attended the meeting.

They are learnt to have discussed ways to augment supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), which are essential to check the spread of coronavirus.

"Nearly 20,000 to 30,000 ventilators are currently not operational in different parts of India due to lack of servicing and non-availability of components. NITI Aayog will share the relevant information of these venti-



The meet was chaired by NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant.

lators with CII and coordinate with state governments to re-operationalise them," a source with knowledge of the deliberations said, quoting discussions at the meeting.

The CII, the source said, will coordinate with ventilator manufacturers and service companies and implement the re-operationalisation process.

It is learnt that the CII has been asked to prepare a list of critical components required to put them back in use.

CII director general Chandrajit Banerjee told *The Indian Express*: "Ventilators presently in India are manufactured by small manufacturers. We have created a coalition between the manufacturers and large companies so that supply can be ramped up. We are also

looking at scale and how we can scale things up for manufacturing ventilators.

"We are looking at defence, automobile manufacturers, and big companies that can do contract manufacturing and scale up the production level."

Sources said officers informed the industry representatives that the government has already placed orders for procuring 50,000 ventilators.

Sources said Medanta CMD Dr Naresh Trehan, who was present in the meeting, has been asked to prepare an online training module and host webinars for information on operating and maintaining of ventilators.

Highlighting the constraints in domestic manufacturing of PPEs, industry representatives are learnt to have demanded import duty exemptions on items such as hi-tech nano-membranes (fabric form) and hot-air seam sealing machines that are required for manufacturing PPEs in the country. Domestic manufacturers at present import such items.

It is learnt that issue of augmenting the supply of COVID-19 diagnostic kits was also discussed. "Key industry leaders highlighted that the current estimate of the requirement of 16 lakh testing kits by June 2020 is

a low number," a source said.

Representatives of industry are also learnt to have drawn the government's attention towards difficulties in import of components required for manufacturing of diagnostic kits domestically.

The group on coordinating with private sector, NGOs and international organisations headed by Kant comprises six other members: Principal Scientific Advisor Dr Vijayaraghavan, NDMA member Kamal Kishore, CBIC member Sandeep Mohan Bhatnagar, Additional Secretary (Home) Anil Malik, Joint Secretary in PMO Gopal Baglay, and Deputy Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, Tina Soni.

The group has held at least five meetings since it was constituted on March 29, and the latest in the series were two separate meetings with representatives of industry associations NASSCOM and FICCI on Friday.

After Friday's meeting, NITI Aayog's Twitter handle posted, quoting Kant, "Supply chain challenges faced in the short term for health products are being actively addressed by the Government. In the long term, sourcing of components can only be addressed by reducing the dependence on imports and fostering Make In India."

## Green impact assessment not needed for bulk drug makers: Environment Ministry

JAY MAZOOMDAAR  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

TO EXPEDITE clearances to manufacturers of bulk drugs and intermediates meant for treating COVID-19, the Environment Ministry has exempted such projects from Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) till September 30 as an interim

measure.

"All proposals for projects or activities in respect of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API), received up to the 30th September 2020, shall be appraised as Category 'B2' projects, provided that any subsequent amendment or expansion or change in product mix, after the 30th September 2020, shall be considered as per the provisions in force at that

time," the Ministry said in a notification dated March 27.

Rules notified under the Environment Protection Act (1986) classify projects into three categories. Projects under Category A are appraised by the Ministry, and those under category B by states. Projects exempted from EIA and public hearings are classified under Category B2.

Underlining that the

Ministry "deems it necessary to expedite the prior Environmental Clearances to the projects or activities in respect of bulk drugs and intermediates," the notification said that drug production and availability "to reduce the impact of the Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) are to be ensured" as part of a "comprehensive and robust system" to handle the outbreak.

## Oppn scoffs at PM address: Country expected concrete steps, got symbolism

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

OPPOSITION PARTIES on Friday scoffed at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his call to the people to light lamps on Sunday to show solidarity in the fight against COVID-19, saying the country expected him to announce concrete steps such as more financial relief measures and not symbolic gestures to distract attention.

"Dear Prime Minister, we will listen to you and light diyas on April 5. But, in return, please listen to us and to the wise counsel of epidemiologists and economists. What we expected from you today was financial action plan II, a generous livelihood support package for the poor, including for those categories of poor who were totally ignored by the FM on March 25," senior Congress leader and former finance minister P Chidambaram tweeted.

"Every working man and woman, from business person to daily wage earner, also expected you to announce steps to arrest the economic slide and re-start the engines of economic growth. The people are disappointed on both counts. Symbolism is important, but serious thought to ideas and measures is equally important," he added.

"Listened to the Pradhan Showman. Nothing about how to ease people's pain, their burdens, their financial anxieties. No vision of the future or sharing the issues he is weighing in deciding about the post-lockdown. Just a feel-good moment curated by

India's Prime Minister!," tweeted Congress MP Shashi Tharoor.

The Left parties—CPI(M), CPI, CPI(ML) Liberation, RSP and Forward Bloc—issued a joint statement in which they asked the government to take urgent steps to stop the growth of widespread hunger and malnutrition, put in place proper healthcare facilities for migrant workers and others who have travelled from various parts, direct Food Corporation of India to procure crops at MSP to prevent distress selling, financially assist states and relax states' borrowing limit, make available essential commodities and medicines to people, provide personal protective equipment to health workers, procure more ventilators and undertake large-scale testing for COVID-19.

Arguing that the message of Prime Minister Modi was disappointing, CPI general secretary D Raja said, "The Prime Minister says that to defeat this darkness, we have to show the light in all directions'. Days and nights are natural process in the universe as much as the light and darkness. What people need now are scientific measures such as vaccines, medicines and other immediate health projects to fight the deadly virus."

Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra tweeted, "Turn out lights and come on balconies? Get real Mr Modi! Give India fiscal package worth 8-10 pc of GDP. Ensure immediate wages to construction & other labour during lockdown—laws exist permitting this. Stop gagging real press in name of curbing fake news," she said.

## Mumbai: 11 CISF personnel at airport test positive

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
MUMBAI, APRIL 3

AT LEAST 11 personnel of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) are among 15 persons who have tested positive for COVID-19 in Panvel, officials said. Panvel Municipal Commissioner Ganesh Deshmukh said it was likely that the personnel had contracted the virus while on duty at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai.

"Once the first jawan tested positive, the CISF sent all his colleagues who had come in con-

tact with him to home quarantine. Then, they had each of their jawans posted at the airport tested. Tests of 11 jawans returned positive," he said.

The infected airport security personnel are being treated at the sub-district hospital in Panvel. Of the other four persons who tested positive, Deshmukh said three were international passengers while another person had recovered.

As of Friday, the Panvel Municipal Corporation had tested 231 individuals, of whom 206 had tested negative. Results of 10 other individuals are awaited, he said.

## SC to Centre: intervene in road closure between Kasaragod, Mangaluru

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

BATTING FOR an amicable settlement of the row between Karnataka and Kerala over the closure of roads linking Kasaragod district to Mangaluru, the Supreme Court on Friday asked the Centre to discuss the matter with the states and formulate parameters for passage of patients for urgent medical treatment.

"We direct the Union of India and the States of Karnataka and Kerala to confer immediately and formulate the parameters for passage of patients for urgent medical treatment at the interstate border at Talapadi," said a bench of Justices L Nageswara Rao and Deepak Gupta. The bench took up via video conferencing an appeal against the Kerala High Court order directing the opening of roads so that patients from Kasaragod can access emergency medical care facilities in Mangaluru.

The bench did not stay the Kerala High Court order but asked the states not to precipitate matters.

In its appeal before the Supreme Court, Karnataka contended that the opening of the roads would lead to law and order issues as local residents were wary of people from Kasaragod crossing over given that the district has the largest number of

COVID-19 cases in the country. On Wednesday, the Kerala High Court had directed the Centre to ensure that blockades put up by Karnataka on national highways connecting it to Kerala are removed forthwith in order to facilitate free movement of vehicles carrying people for urgent medical treatment between the two states.

The High Court ruled seven patients from Kasaragod, bordering Karnataka, who regularly availed hospital facilities in Mangaluru. The relatives of the deceased alleged that they could not cross the border due to the blockade imposed by Karnataka.

Before the High Court, Karnataka Advocate General had contended that the court would be exceeding its territorial jurisdiction if it issues any direction.

But the court rejected this and said, "When a High Court of a state finds and declares the actions of the government 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."

## Prince Charles's office denies he recovered using Ayurveda

SHUBHAJIT ROY & SMITA NAIR  
NEW DELHI, PANAJI, APRIL 3

A DAY after Union Minister of State for AYUSH Shripad Naik claimed that ayurvedic treatment helped UK's Prince Charles to be cured of coronavirus, the Prince's spokesperson on Friday rejected the claim and said that he had "followed the medical advice of the NHS in the UK".

Ella Lynch, a spokesperson for the Prince of Wales, said in an email to *The Indian Express* on Friday, "This information is incorrect. The Prince of Wales followed the medical advice of the NHS (National Health Service) in the UK and nothing more."

Lynch was responding to Naik's claim at a media briefing in Goa on Thursday that Prince Charles's recovery "validates our age-old practice since thousands of years".



Prince Charles AP File

turned the call yet, and nothing in writing has come."

On ayurveda and claims he had made on Thursday, Naik said, "Ayurveda is a preventive medicine. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has encouraged us in the ministry to do our research. We have experts involved in this...100 formulas have been presented as cure to the virus. We have now put them to test and will release once it is scientifically validated."

Naik said, "I told him to specifically get it in writing—that he (Charles) was cured due to medication from his centre. He said he will get it but hasn't re-





## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY  
**RAMNATH GOENKA**

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

### OPENING THE LOCK

It will need a clear set of transparent plans and fallbacks. States should hold the key

**L**IKE IN NOW almost half of the world, the lockdown in India is a powerful weapon to contain the spread of Covid-19 in the second most populous nation. Equally important and timely is the prime ministerial nudge to begin the conversation over the process of unlocking India. The lockdown was necessarily precipitate and all bases could not be covered. But now there is time to think, to deliberate and to involve all stakeholders, especially the state governments. In fact, since public commitment is essential in a war — and this is an extraordinary world war in which all nations are on the same side — taking the public into confidence would be profitable. In this pandemic, human beings are vectors, and their cooperation would determine outcomes.

In his meeting with chief ministers on Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi indicated a phased unlocking and asked states to work out the details. Several options are on the table, ranging from social distancing until Diwali, through lockdowns in pockets, to general lockdowns in response to future surges. While the government may not know its own mind at present — indeed, responses must evolve according to fresh information — it would be useful to understand what the phases consist of, and by what metrics they would be triggered: A fall in the death rate, or in the rate of fresh infections, or the total burden of disease, or the extent of hotspots? A model developed by the Indian Council of Medical Research reported in this newspaper suggests that an aggressive test-and-quarantine push could bring down the epidemic peak and mortality by 28 per cent and 21 per cent from current projections. But when would the logistics for such a push be available? By all accounts, the Centre has rightly placed faith in the states and their apparatus at the district level, but the conversation between the Centre and the states could be more symmetric, and their medical and logistical resources brought more fully on board in the discussions.

States like Kerala, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal have each brought a special strategy to bear on aspects of the containment exercise. India is structurally diverse, and all states need not unlock in the same manner or at the same rate. However, there must be some agreement on the key metrics to be relied upon, and this should be shared transparently. For now, there are only two certainties — that the virus will go away someday, and that the lockdown is not for ever. Both planners and the people need more certainties so that people's lives, and the nation, can move forward in a predictable manner. That's not easy, so the more heads that come together, the better.

### STATES AT CENTRE

Centre must urgently clear its dues to states, allow them to borrow more to tide over crisis

**T**HE FISCAL CRISIS stemming from the disruption in economic activity due to the coronavirus is now beginning to show. Concerned over the impact on their revenues, several state governments planned cuts in salaries of government employees. While they have softened their stance subsequently — salaries will be paid in a staggered manner — the situation nonetheless underlines the severity of the cash crunch being faced by state governments. The stress to state finances stems from multiple sources. First, as economic growth falters, their own income streams, for instance, revenues from petroleum products, real estate transactions, will slow down further, as will GST collections, and the amount collected through the compensation cess will not be enough to meet budgeted expectations. Second, as the Centre's own revenues also slow down, transfers to states will take a hit. It is quite likely that tax devolution to states, which has been budgeted at Rs 78 lakh crore in 2020-21, will not materialise. As, collectively, state expenditure far outstrips that by the Centre, with revenues falling short, any cut backs in their spending, at a time when there is a need for a bold fiscal expansion, will further aggravate the economic stress. Thus, states, which are at the frontline of fighting the public health crisis, need to be assured of adequate resources.

On Tuesday, the Reserve Bank of India decided to increase the ways and means advances (WMA) limit by 30 per cent for state governments. The WMA is a temporary liquidity arrangement with the RBI which helps governments tide over their short-term liquidity woes. While states have been averse to opting for this facility in the past, and the new WMA limits may need to be revised further if the mismatch rises, this is a short-term measure, and does not address the underlying issue of significant revenue slippages. Under the existing fiscal deficit constraint, the collapse in revenues will force states to cut back on spending, imparting a contractionary impulse to the economy.

Thus, the Centre must take several steps to ensure adequate flow of resources to states. First, it must immediately clear all its pending dues to state governments. Second, while it is cheaper for the Centre to borrow and transfer to states, even though the spreads between state and central government bonds have now widened, making state borrowing more costly, states must be allowed to borrow more. As some state chief ministers have suggested, the fiscal deficit limits imposed on states must be relaxed.

### THE STILL OF APRIL

Across sports, dreams are being downsized, goals and goalposts have changed

**I**N A HOME video gone viral, Lionel Messi's son is doing sit-ups as his father lifts bars. Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos has posted a video of his training session that has his three kids playing by his side. Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen is skipping in the backyard. Formula One racer Fernando Alonso has picked a new hobby, painting. England striker Marcus Rashford is learning German. With the COVID-19 lockdown bringing sports to a grinding halt, the globe-trotting elite athletes, so used to the draining hotel-stadium schedule, are adjusting to a relatively sedentary life. It's a difficult adjustment, a challenge they have not faced before.

April has always been that time of the year when sports gets more intense. This is when the calendar gets busier, the title race heats up and the relegation battle intensifies. If not for the pandemic, footballers would have been busy with the Champions League knockouts. Managers of international football teams would have started to finalise their combinations and strategies for the European Championships and COPA. Cricketers would have been hopping from one city to another while being part of the Indian Premier League circus. The Olympians, who had spent four years dreaming and planning, would have intensified their work load. Now, they must rejig — the four-year plan has become a five-year chore. It's a bolt from the blue. No athlete would have factored in the probability of a pandemic while drawing out a path to the top of the podium.

Now, both the goals and goalposts have changed. Dreams have been downsized and the bars of achievements dragged down. Forget titles and medals, glory and honour, players would trade anything to be just on the field. In such grim times — when sport has peripheral relevance — the athletes sitting at home have only the uncertainty of their next game as company.



JAVED ANAND

UNTIL THE OTHER day, not many outside the Muslim community had heard of an organisation named the Tablighi Jamaat. Little did people know about this century-old India-born body which, today, is the largest apolitical, Islamic revivalist global movement. Notwithstanding this, a vast majority of Muslims ridicule and dismiss this "nutcase" movement as good-for-nothing. "Woh sirf zaameen ke neeche aur aasman ke upar waali zindagi ki baat karte hain" (They only talk of life in the grave and in the Hereafter).

Today, the Jamaat has, virtually overnight, earned for itself the ill-repute of being the "largest known" COVID-19 source in South and South-East Asia. In India, many participants at an international gathering of around 4,000 Jamaatis at the Tablighi's global headquarters — Nizamuddin Markaz — in Delhi held from March 13 to March 15 have carried back the coronavirus with them to distant corners of the country. An earlier international gathering of over 16,000 participants in Malaysia in February led to the transmission of the COVID-19 disease to several countries, including neighbouring Thailand and distant Brunei. In Pakistan, the Jamaat's proposed assembly in March of 1,50,000 participants near Lahore was cancelled at the last minute. But by then, delegates from across the world had already landed at the venue, living in close proximity to one another. Following a screening of 35 members at their headquarters in Raiwind, 27 of the Tablighis tested positive for coronavirus.

On March 30, the Delhi government cordoned off the entire Nizamuddin locality once it became known that a startlingly high number of Covid cases detected across India until now were traceable to the meet in the national capital. Two days later, a total of 2,346 persons still residing at the Markaz were evacuated; 536 were admitted to hospital and 1,810 quarantined. An FIR has been filed against the Amir (chief) of the Jamaat, Maulana Muhammad Saad Kandhalawi, and several others for disregarding several directives of the Delhi government under the Epidemic Diseases Act prohibiting the gathering of more than 200 persons. Pleading not guilty, the Jamaat claims non-response from

The already rampant communal virus in India is gleefully piggy-back riding on the novel coronavirus

the authorities to its repeated pleas for help with transport to disperse those "stranded" at the Markaz (centre). Only an impartial probe can establish the role of the Jamaat as also the government authorities in the build-up of this hotspot within shouting distance of the Nizamuddin police station.

The Jamaat is by no means the only body culpable of gross neglect and irresponsible conduct in the current crisis. But it must account for its own idiotic role in the escalation of the pandemic. On January 30, a full six weeks before the mid-March meet in Delhi, the World Health Organisation (WHO) had declared a global health emergency. By mid-February, the coronavirus had surfaced in a number of south-east Asian countries. In the fast deteriorating scenario, why did the Jamaat leadership not cancel the event which included participants from COVID-19 affected countries?

No less disturbing is the audio-tape reportedly containing a message to his flock from Maulana Saad: "Don't pay heed if they ask us to lock down mosques"; "There is no better place to die than a mosque"; "Allah is punishing us for abandoning mosques"; "Won't pay heed if even doctors advise to not pray in mosques". That this may not be a doctored audio tape is indicated by the fact that similar shocking sentiments have been expressed by the maulana's counterparts from across the Wagah. Meanwhile, a second audio tape, also purportedly of the maulana, has surfaced, advising fellow Tablighis thus: "I am in self-quarantine in Delhi as advised by the doctors and appeal to all Jamaat members wherever they are in the country to follow the directives of the law". The message warns that the coronavirus is an expression of Allah's wrath because of the sins of us human beings.

Such may be the views of the Tablighi Jamaat, but by no means are they the consensus among Muslims. On March 20, Saudi Arabia suspended congregational prayers at Mecca and Medina. Taking their cue from a saying of the Prophet, similar restrictions have been placed on mosques and other holy places elsewhere in the Arab world as also in the self-proclaimed Islamic Republic of Iran. In India, the doors of mosques across India have remained shut since the national lockdown just as those of temples, churches and gurdwaras.

On March 20, Saudi Arabia suspended congregational prayers at Mecca and Medina. Taking their cue from a saying of the Prophet, similar restrictions have been placed on mosques and other holy places elsewhere in the Arab world as also in the self-proclaimed Islamic Republic of Iran. In India, the doors of mosques across India have remained shut since the national lockdown just as those of temples, churches and gurdwaras.

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Yet, even as the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, has warned that the world faces the most challenging crisis since World War II, the already rampant communal virus in India is gleefully piggy-back riding on the novel coronavirus. The Tablighi's highly irresponsible words and deeds are "fresh proof" to Hindutva that "Muslims are like that only".

To their credit, the chief ministers of Kerala and West Bengal, Pinarayi Vijayan and Mamata Banerjee respectively, have been quick to caution against "sensationalising coronavirus" by giving it a communal complexion. Regretting that social media was being used for a "communal harvest" over COVID-19, Vijayan observed: "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."

In this moment of grave national and international crisis, such sagacious words should, above all, have come from the prime minister. But that, sadly, seems most unlikely. What we have, instead, are warnings from BJP leaders of "Islamic insurrection" and "corona jihad". The Jamaat episode has also come in handy to the country's lapdog media. It can now gleefully scapegoat Muslims, help divert public attention from the colossal mishandling of the crisis by the authorities. If the Jamaat leaders deserve an FIR what about the prime minister who with his thoughtless four-hour countdown for a national lockdown triggered a stampede across urban India (social distancing?) and a "reverse migration" that reminded some people of Partition times?

The need of the hour is national unity and international solidarity, not hate-driven divisive politics. Is that too much to expect from the BJP, the Sangh Parivar and its servile media?

*The writer is convenor, Indian Muslims for Secular Democracy, and co-editor, Sabrang India online*



KHALED AHMED

OMAR SAEED SHEIKH, accused of kidnapping and killing American journalist Daniel Pearl in Karachi in 2002, and who was sentenced to death by a Hyderabad Sindh special court, has been acquitted of the charge of murder by the Sindh High Court after 18 years. No evidence was found against him. He has been given seven years' imprisonment for aiding and abetting Pearl's kidnapping. He has already served his required prison sentence and will hence be released very soon.

This means that a pathologically violent man is, once again, free to carry on his jihad against imagined enemies. When Omar got the death sentence for helping al Qaeda's Khalid Sheikh Muhammad behead Pearl, he criticised the judgment as "given under pressure from the Americans". Public reaction was mixed, and Omar continued his defiance, threatening "those who want to kill me" with death, and calling his trial "a struggle between Islam and kufri".

Why has the High Court let him off? Commentators point to some "flaws". A Lashkar-e-Jhangvi terrorist came up with additional confessional evidence during the trial, which was not taken cognisance of. Neither the discovery of the beheaded corpse of Pearl, nor its DNA test result, was allowed to feature in the trial. These were points of law that the appellate court was to adjudicate on.

The trial was shifted to the Hyderabad jail from Karachi because the prosecution kept receiving threatening messages from the terror-

### NO ORDINARY CRIMINAL

That Omar Sheikh is let off by Pakistan court should worry the world

ists supporting Omar. The attorney general of Sindh stated that he would like the state to appeal for the death sentence of the other three also, as "he feared for his life" because of them.

The case, registered on February 4, 2002, proceeded under international limelight and concluded on July 15, 2002. General Pervez Musharraf wanted to see the accused hanged and said so in a public statement. The American government wanted Omar on other counts of terrorism, but deferred to Pakistan's desire to try him for the crime he had committed on Pakistani soil.

He was no ordinary criminal. Before this, Omar had been released from an Indian jail after the hijack of an Indian airliner in 1999. He had been tried in India for kidnapping foreigners in New Delhi, about which he had even left behind a graphic diary. He had also been trying to get Maulana Masood Azhar, a fellow-member of his jihadi organisation, Harkat-ul-Ansar, released from an Indian jail.

His friend, Azhar, went on to become the leader of Jaish-e-Muhammad. After 9/11, Jaish was banned by Pakistan, and Azhar was interned. Reports appeared in Pakistan at the time about Omar looking after Jaish and its affiliates, and even editing their extremist publications. Later, Jaish was found linked to Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, whose members finally came forward to own the murder of Pearl.

One reason Omar's trial had to be held in Pakistan was his putative connection with the country's intelligence agencies. His extra-

dition to the US could have resulted in him "spilling the beans" about the complicity of some members of these agencies in the realm of international terrorism — there has been a persistent charge, first aired by the CNN, that Omar sent funds to Muhammad Atta, the suicide bomber who attacked the World Trade Center in September 2001.

It was always feared that Omar won't be hanged. In his Hyderabad cell, he was allowed "facilities" that are possible only with the connivance of deep state elements. He reportedly started threatening General Musharraf over the phone: "I am after you, get ready to die." Subsequent investigations revealed the threatening phone call was made by someone from the Hyderabad Central Jail. Being a suspect, Omar was placed under observation before it transpired that he was indeed the one who had threatened Musharraf. Significantly, by all accounts, the deep state, too, had tried unsuccessfully to kill him — he narrowly escaped each time.

Omar was a violent youth who grew up in the United Kingdom and imbibed an extremist worldview. From his school days in Lahore, he was known as an unusually violent personality. His pathological proclivities, soon mixed with ideology, produced a man who now threatens the world, again, with terrorism.

*The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan*

### APRIL 4, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

#### ASSAM SATYAGRAHA

THE ALL-ASSAM STUDENTS' Union and All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad launched a week-long mass satyagraha outside the offices of deputy commissioners, sub-divisional officers, sub-deputy collectors and block development officers in the state as part of their agitation on the foreign national issue. At Gauhati, hundreds of men and women from different parts of the city demonstrated outside the deputy commissioner's office. Some of them were arrested and later released. Meanwhile, the state chief secretary, R S Paramasivam, renewed his appeal to the leaders of the current movement to allow the flow of crude from the state and

to seek fresh talks with the prime minister.

#### MINORITIES IN POLICE

STATE CHIEF SECRETARIES and inspectors-general of police broadly endorsed the steps suggested by the Centre to curtail growing lawlessness and prevent communal disharmony and caste conflicts, and to ensure effective distribution of essential commodities. The day-long discussions they had with the top brass of the home ministry were primarily devoted to the "groundwork" for the conference of governors of centrally administered states and other chief ministers scheduled for April 7. At the end of the deliberations, the Union home secretary, S M H

Burney, said that the Centre had asked the states to give adequate representation to the SCs, STs and minorities in the police force.

#### AVIATION POLICY

THE TOURISM AND civil aviation ministry is inching towards a liberalisation of the aviation policy. This is indicated by the statements from the minister, J B Patnaik and his deputy, Kartik Oraon, in the last two months. As part of the overall plan to increase the country's tourist inflows, plans are under preparation to allow import of aircraft for private parties to run third-level air services, executive aircraft for use by big business houses and small six-seaters for private air taxi services.





# 7 THE IDEAS PAGE

## Man versus Microbe

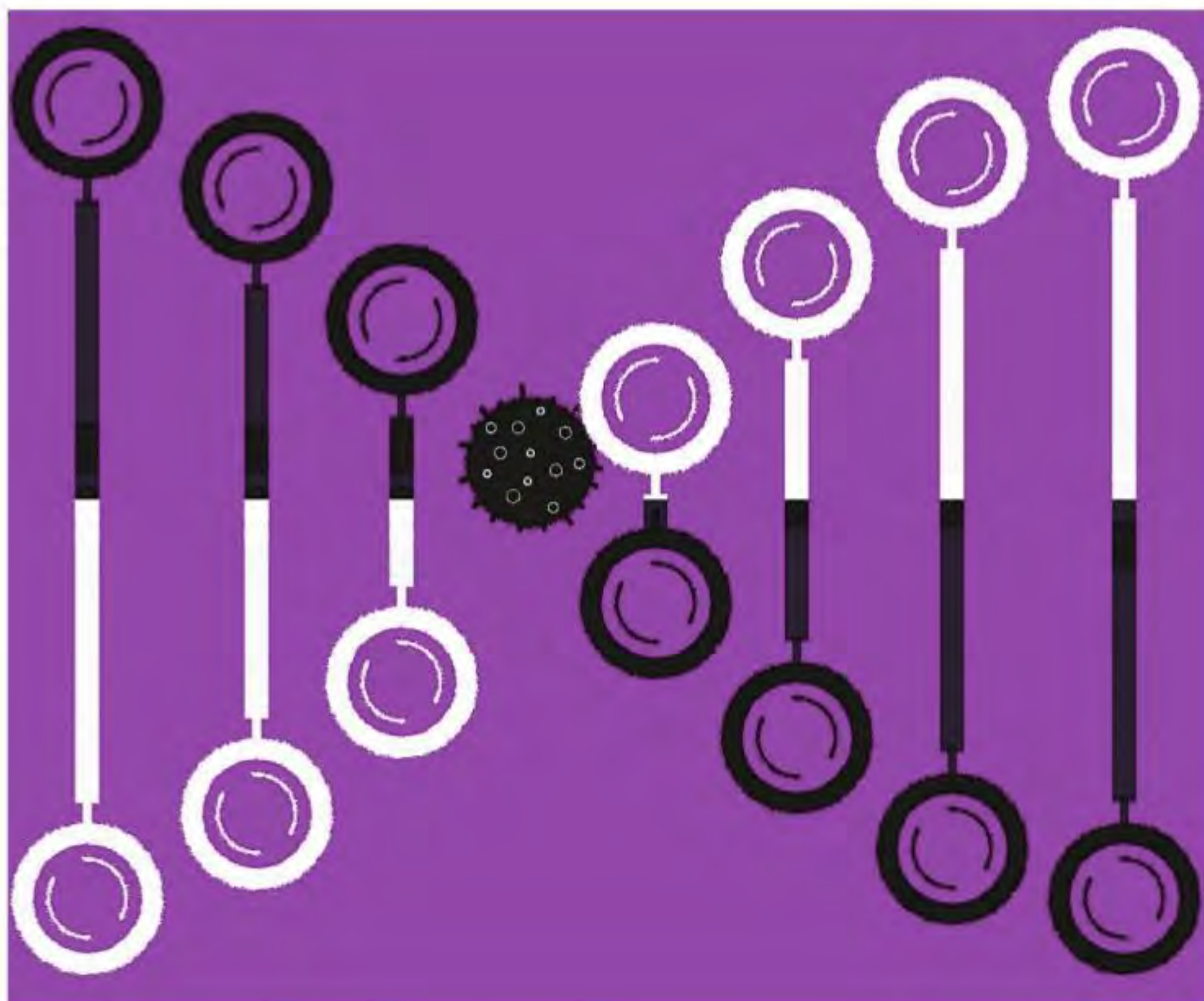
The COVID-19 virus seems to have the upper hand for now. But new technologies are emerging that will greatly enhance the speed of large-scale testing, relieve pressure faced by frontline healthcare providers



VIRANDER S CHAUHAN

THE STRUGGLE FOR survival between microbes, like viruses and bacteria, and humans is as old as humankind itself. Microbes, particularly viruses, have only one goal — to find a suitable host and multiply. Viruses, however, do not multiply by themselves. They need the cell machinery of the host for replication. Around two-thirds of all infections in humans are caused by viruses. The current COVID-19 outbreak caused by a coronavirus, SARS-CoV2, has brought this struggle to light once again. As of now, the virus appears to have an upper hand. It seems highly successful because it spreads rapidly from human to human and has a lower rate of mortality. Humans have faced new viruses at regular intervals. These include the Ebola, Zika, HIV, the Flu virus H1N1, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) — the latter two are from the coronavirus family. It is noteworthy that these viruses have all appeared in the last few decades, having jumped from their animal reservoirs to humans. Many of these viruses have a much higher mortality rate than the SARS-CoV2 that caused COVID-19. Like before, humans will come out of the present crisis as winners but that will happen at a huge cost, in every sense of the word — untimely loss of human lives, economic losses and a general loss of confidence in the human ability to deal with a tiny unknown enemy.

The first step in dealing with any new viral outbreak is to be able to accurately test, detect and track the spread of the virus, and isolate the infected persons to stop further spread. To do this, it is important to obtain information on the genetic makeup of the virus, which forms the basis of developing highly specific diagnostic tests. Currently, the most reliable and widely-used test is based on a technique called RT-PCR (Reverse Transcription Time Polymerase Chain Reaction). This test aims to detect the viral RNA, the genetic material of SARS-CoV2. The testing begins with the careful collection of swabs taken from the nose or the back of the throat of the patient and extraction of the viral RNA. However, this extracted viral RNA from the swab is too tiny an amount for direct detection. The RT-PCR, through many different reactions that include the conversion of viral RNA to DNA — its amplification and detection — makes it possible to confirm the presence or absence of the virus. The testing kits contain all chemicals and materials required for carrying out the RT-PCR based tests, which are performed by government-approved laboratories such as India's National Institute of Virology. However, many more testing centres, including those run by private players, have now been allowed to carry out the tests in many countries to bridge the huge demand and supply gap. It is now clear that countries which were able to scale up the testing of the virus in patients at an early stage were able to control the spread of the disease far better than those which did not. Given that there is no cure or vaccine for the control of COVID-19, testing of infected patients much more quickly and



CR Sasikumar

tracking their contacts to isolate them till they clear off the virus is currently the only viable control measure.

Fortunately, there is good news of a relatively new but powerful technology called CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats), which is highly specific in directly detecting viral RNA and confirming the presence or absence of the virus. Interestingly, viruses also attack bacteria and the discovery of CRISPR itself was based on understanding how bacteria cut off the viruses. The CRISPR-based test is quick and circumvents the need for both expert handling as well as PCR machines and can be done at multiple locations in about half an hour. It can also fend off delays and other logistic problems in collection and transportation of test samples. These tests are being validated and readied for approval. Two companies, separately founded by the two scientists who discovered the CRISPR technique, have also announced that they are ready with their CRISPR-based test for validation and approval. They have claimed that these tests can be performed within 10 minutes and can be conducted by using a paper strip format. Another company, Abbott Laboratories, has recently announced the approval of their portable test for coronavirus, which the company claims can provide the results in five minutes. Such a point of care test will not only greatly enhance the speed of large-scale testing but will also relieve the tremendous pressure faced by frontline healthcare providers.

These above described RT-PCR and the newly developed CRISPR based tests are needed for scaling up the testing but many individuals infected with the virus do not

show symptoms of the disease and recover completely. How to test these cases to gather realistic information on the spread of the virus? Such information will be necessary for designing future control strategies. This is done with serological tests, which are carried out in blood samples collected from a large population and are based on the detection of antibodies that are produced in response to the viral infection. These tests are relatively easier to develop and use, less expensive, and also do not need much sophisticated infrastructure or highly trained manpower. Serological tests for COVID-19 have already been developed by many groups and are already in use. India also plans to carry out serological tests to examine the actual spread of the disease in different parts of the country.

The world is still grappling with the present unprecedented public health crisis. It is imperative that large-scale testing is implemented at the earliest in as many locations as possible. Lockdowns are essential to control the disease but long-term strategies to deal with the disease would be based on the knowledge of its actual spread. The newly-developed point of care tests should be successfully able to bridge the existing gap in the testing of the virus. This will also assist in gearing up facilities to treat the severely sick as well as relieve and protect frontline health providers. Meanwhile, hopefully, efficient drugs therapies and efficacious vaccines against COVID-19 will also be discovered soon.

There is good news of a relatively new but powerful technology called CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) which is highly specific in directly detecting viral RNA and confirming the presence or absence of the virus. Interestingly, viruses also attack bacteria and the discovery of CRISPR itself was based on understanding how bacteria cut off the viruses. The CRISPR-based test is quick and circumvents the need for both expert handling as well as PCR machines and can be done at multiple locations in about half an hour. It can also fend off delays and other logistic problems.

The writer is former chairman UGC and former director of the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, where he currently holds the Arturo Falaschi Chair

### WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"While the world is preoccupied with battling the Covid-19 contagion, elements within the Indian establishment, unfortunately, are still busy stirring up mischief in Kashmir."

— DAWN

## Lives and livelihoods

Success of lockdown will depend on implementation. So far, poor and marginalised share a disproportionate burden



DEEPAK NAYYAR

INDIA HAS been in a complete lockdown since March 25. Its 1.3 billion people, except for those providing essential services, are confined to their homes. In effect, this began three days earlier and might well continue beyond April 14. The rationale is to slow down the spread of COVID-19, and to reduce the peak level of infections, breaking the chain of transmission through social distancing. The objective of saving lives is unexceptionable. However, for the well-being of people, saving livelihoods is just as important.

Given the massive population and our dilapidated public health system, it might seem that a total lockdown is the only way to manage the spread of the virus. But this is not a fail-safe solution. The outcomes will depend upon its feasibility and implementation.

Social, or physical, distancing is feasible among people who live in homes that have doors providing private spaces but is impossible in urban slums or shanty-towns where people live cheek-by-jowl, or even in rural India where the poor live in cramped spaces. The lockdown might simply distance the poor from the rest.

The geographical size and distances of India might make it exceedingly difficult to maintain the supply of essentials to people, particularly when the entire country and its production systems are largely shut down. Supply chains are as good as their weakest links or binding shackles.

So far, the lockdown is an administrative fiasco that could turn into a nightmare. The police are a problem rather than the solution. Citizens are being harassed, intimidated, even beaten. More than half of the 12 million trucks have been stopped, supposedly for carrying non-essentials, on highways. Many truck drivers have abandoned their trucks and left. Insufficient supplies, exacerbated by hoarding, are already driving up prices of necessities imposing a disproportionate burden on the poor.

The government's latest Labour Force Survey yields telling evidence. In 2017-18, our total labour force was 465 million. Of this total, 52 per cent were self-employed, 25 per cent were casual labour on daily wages, 13 per cent were in informal employment without any social protection, and only 10 per cent were in regular employment of which a significant proportion were contract workers without most usual benefits.

In the lockdown, only those in regular employment — less than 10 per cent of the labour force — will continue to receive their incomes. The rest are at risk. Among them, other than agriculture, where employment is seasonal and limited, the most vulnerable sectors, are construction (54 million), trade (47 million), transport (22 million), and hotels & restaurants (9 million) — a total of 132 million. Of this, only five million have regular employment, while 127 million people are self-employed, casual labour or informal workers.

The plight of migrants in our cities — construction workers, street vendors, restaurant employees, delivery persons, rickshaw drivers, and so on — is grim. Deprived of their work, and their dignity, uncertain about where their next meal will come from, most of them are desperate to return to their homes in villages. There is no public transport during the lockdown. Yet, there is a mass exodus. Thousands are setting out on foot, carrying their children, to walk hundreds of miles, braving the sun, their hunger, and the police.

The irony in the asymmetry is striking. The rich or the middle-class who travel abroad carry the virus. The poor who can never dream of travel abroad must carry the burden. The government chartered Air India planes with medical staff to bring migrants home from affected countries in Asia and Europe. When the closure of Indian airspace was imminent, the super-rich reportedly chartered private jets to bring home their children studying in the UK and Europe. In contrast, migrants in our cities, who have lost their livelihoods to the lockdown, must find night shelters and open kitchens run by local governments or charities, which are nowhere near enough.

In response, the government has announced a Rs 1.7 trillion package to help the poor, of which Rs 0.7 trillion are disbursements for existing schemes or drawdowns from funds available with state governments, without any new resource allocation. Of the remaining Rs 1 trillion, apart from an extra 15 kg of wheat or rice and 3 kg of pulses for poor households over three months (which should have been double if not triple these quantities given the massive stocks of foodgrains), the other components are far from sufficient and will be even less when implemented. This timid response, shaped by fiscal conservatism, simply cannot suffice.

Even if the lockdown ends on April 14, it will take much longer for economic activities that have shut-down to return to normal. In the meantime, the poor in urban and rural India would have experienced a massive cut in their meagre incomes, while accumulating debt for survival. Their already low nutrition levels will be even lower, which in turn is bound to reduce their resilience and lower their immunity to any infection, let alone COVID-19.

History does not repeat itself. But it would be wise to learn from history. In 1918, Spanish influenza, which spread worldwide, led to an estimated 50 million deaths. Around 18-20 million deaths were in India. The influenza came to India through 1.25 million soldiers returning after the war, through Bombay port, and going to their homes on trains. More than half of those who died were women — caregivers — because their nutrition levels, resilience and immunity were low.

The lockdown could have been introduced in phases, as it was in China and South Korea. It should have come with a prior plan to provide social safety nets for the poor. It should have anticipated the plight of migrants in our cities. And it could have been implemented better. We can only hope that the COVID-19 bug does not survive the high temperatures of our summer, but we must prepare for the worst.

The writer is an economist and former vice-chancellor, University of Delhi



RANDEEP SURJEWALA AND MUHAMMAD KHAN

## Include, learn, fight

Centre must use resources, skills of states, Opposition in battle against COVID-19

IT IS a fundamental tenet of political theory that given a crisis large enough, humanity will unite to resolve and address it. This makes sense because a crisis offers opportunities for bipartisanship. Indeed, we have seen this in the state of Kerala, where the Left government and the Congress-led Opposition are working together to ensure that the COVID-19 crisis is tackled in a manner that utilises every possible resource and skill.

The approach of the BJP government at the Centre seems to run counter to this belief. The prime minister has not sought to involve or invite the Opposition, led by the Congress, which has a rich body of expertise and leadership to assist in times like these. It is also emerging that the PM did not consult with state leaders (at least non-BJP state leaders) before announcing the lockdown. Nonetheless, we place these recommendations in the public domain. We hope that the government may find them useful.

First, involve and learn from states like Chhattisgarh, Punjab and Rajasthan. In Chhattisgarh, which has a robust PDS system, free rations of rice are being given to around 6.5 million families for April and May. Industries have been directed to provide free rations to workers and the panchayats are being provided with two quintals of rice for those who may need it. The state was among the first to set up state-of-the-art quarantine centres and as a result, there were only around seven confirmed cases in the state at

the end of March.

Rajasthan, in addition to similar measures, has ensured the rapid manufacture of over five lakh hand sanitisers, innovatively, through sugar mills and distilleries, for healthcare workers. The government has also sought to ensure that migrants do not face unnecessary harassment while travelling. Punjab was one of the first states to respond to reports of police excesses and take immediate action. The state leadership also coordinated with the government of Bihar to ensure that migrant workers from the latter are adequately taken care of.

These are scalable experiences if only the Centre would create a task force comprising representatives of the states to meet every day (through teleconferencing), coordinate responses and share information in real-time. There is no viable justification for working in silos without such a central coordination committee.

Second, testing is key to prevention. We must focus our resources and energies on ensuring tools for quick, contactless mass testing. Countries such as Germany have already introduced these measures. These will help us accurately identify and contain centres of concentration before they spread. It is equally vital to ensure the safety of our healthcare professionals and frontline workers. It is short-sighted of the central government to delay the ban on the export of surgical masks till as late as March 19 and ventilators, hand

sanitiser and other breathing equipment till March 24. We must look at a clear import and manufacturing policy before it is too late.

Third, create a safety net to deal with the looming economic crisis. Even dedicated and unwavering supporters of this government are urging the PM to adopt the Minimum Income Guarantee scheme proposed by Rahul Gandhi, called Nyay, to offset the inevitable wave of unemployment. The government must also identify and listen to leaders with experience in dealing with situations like this. The Congress-led UPA government in 2009 battled the H1N1 virus as it spread throughout India and the same was ultimately contained. The lessons of that era are likely to be of great relevance and value.

Fourth, resist the urge to turn everything into a platform for personal vanity and applause. Activities like thali-clapping are no substitute for fighting this issue on a targeted, scientific and daily basis. Giving impassioned speeches does not remedy the fact that people were, once again, given only four hours before midnight to stock up on medication, essentials and to make travel arrangements. Assuming the central government had planned this a week in advance, sufficient time to the people would have alleviated the unmitigated suffering of millions of migrant workers walking home without food, medicine or shelter. The disruption in the supply chains that has caused artificial inflation of all essential commodities could have been

avoided.

The Opposition and the people have stood with the government in adhering to and supporting the decision of the 21-day lockdown. However, it is the constitutional duty of the Opposition to ask relevant questions such as how the economic package will be implemented to the benefit of the people. What about the plight of farmers, given that the harvesting season is here? How will we address resulting unemployment in a country where almost 80 per cent of the workforce is in the informal or unorganised sector? How will we address the concerns that threaten to devastate MSMEs and imperil the middle class?

A Common Minimum Relief Charter is necessary to provide clarity. The government is elected to serve the people and the actions it takes cannot be construed as charity to be celebrated in fawning tributes. The PM should remember the maxim by which all governments must abide — Salus Populi Suprema Lex (the good of the people is the highest law).

There were several ways to deal with this crisis. None of them involved treating citizens like the problem. This crisis will require improvisation and adaptation on a scale never seen before. We need to stand together if we are to rise to the challenge.

Surjewala is the AICC media in-charge and an advocate. Khan is an advocate

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### STRONGER, AFTER

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Opportunity in the crisis', (IE, April 3). A crisis offers a rare opportunity to assess the robustness of a system. This global pandemic will compel us to revisit all progress humanity has made over the years and our vulnerability. Be it the political institutions, diplomatic alliances, technological prowess or the trade and finance system, the scale of this health catastrophe has shaken almost every aspect of mankind.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

#### NO BLAME GAME

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Life and death' (IE, April 3). That the National Security Advisor visited Nizamuddin at 2:00 am to convince leaders of the Tablighi jamaat to ask all those in the area and beyond who are their followers to get tested and quarantined speaks volumes. It is a testament to the restraint shown by the government in dealing with an unprecedented crisis.

Krishan Kumar Chug, Delhi

#### SHORT SHRIFT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Carte blanche and a blind eye' (IE, April 3). The Supreme Court's judgment clearly

#### LETTER OF THE WEEK

##### SEE THEM

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Virus, 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

shows that it has seen the whole issue through the government's lens. Along with other recent verdicts, the one concerning migrants' plight also casts a shadow over the judiciary's independence. Daily wagers, who have suffered the most due to the lockdown, have been given short shrift.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur





CORONA WATCH



At a vegetable market in Mumbai. PTI

## US embassy staffer tests positive

New Delhi: An employee of the US embassy has tested positive for COVID-19 and is being provided medical treatment, an embassy spokesperson said on Friday. "We are aware of reports of a COVID-19 case related to an embassy New Delhi employee. We are working with Indian health authorities to ensure the employee receives proper treatment," the spokesperson said. "Due to privacy concerns, we are not able to share additional information." It is not clear whether the employee is a US diplomat or an Indian staffer. **ENS**

## SC stays Rajasthan HC verdict

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Friday stayed a Rajasthan High Court order asking the HC Registry to not list matters of bail and suspension of sentence as matters of extreme urgency during the lockdown. A bench of Justices L Nageswara Rao and Deepak Gupta stayed the March 31 order by a single judge of the High Court. The High Court had then reasoned that if favourable orders are passed in such such matters, it would entail further proceedings that would require people to be on the ground—thereby adversely affecting the lockdown. **ENS**

## Karnataka: 2 held for illegal liquor sale

Bengaluru: A large cache of illegally stocked liquor was seized from a house here and two persons were arrested for selling it at exorbitant rates, police said Friday. The seizure of the Indian-made foreign liquor—comprising 100 bottles of whiskey and beer—came during a raid in RT Nagar locality on Thursday. The two arrested persons were selling some of the liquor for Rs 4,000-5,000 a bottle, police said. **PTI**

## 7 ARRESTED, 4 BOOKED UNDER NSA FOR ATTACK ON INDORE MEDICAL TEAM

# 'Hum frontline workers darr jayenge to kaam kaun karega?'

MILIND GHATWAI BHOPAL, APRIL 3

TWO DAYS since facing the most harrowing time in her career till date as a homeopathic practitioner, Zakiya Syed is still to come to terms with the attack on a COVID-19 monitoring team, which she was part of, at Tatpatti Bakhal locality of Indore on Wednesday. Especially since this came at the same locality they had visited over the previous few days and quarantined nearly 70 people—all without any trouble.

Sporting personal protection equipment (PPE), Syed, 34, said her team was taking notes and asking about symptoms, previous illnesses and travel history of people when they suddenly heard shouts of "maaro maaro (hit them)". Soon, a mob hurled

abuses and chased them with stones, pipes and cans.

Syed said she had handled angry relatives and patients at public health centres in the past but had never imagined that one day she would be chased by a mob of more than 150 people, "throwing anything and everything they could lay their hands on".

"I was really scared. My mind stopped working. I don't recall how many minutes the ordeal lasted," Tripti Katdare, who was with Syed, said. "It's difficult to walk with the PPE suit—I could not run; I fell down. Luckily, it was not far, else it would have been difficult to come out..."

Syed said the residents were simply "not ready" to listen. "I even told them that I was a Muslim doctor, and that they must listen to me, but they were in no mood to relent. I realise a

and returned to their countries before the lockdown was put in place.

In all these cases, sources said, the foreign nationals were found to have arrived on tourist visas and later engaged in proselytising activities for which visas are issued under the "missionary" category.

According to MHA sources, 379 Indonesians attended the Nizamuddin gathering. Incidentally, the connection between the Markaz and a COVID-19 surge was first discovered on March 17 when an Indonesian, who had travelled to Telangana after attending the gathering, tested positive.

According to the MHA, the next big group to be blacklisted are from Bangladesh (110), followed by Kyrgyzstan (77), Malaysia (75), Thailand (65) and Myanmar (63).

MHA sources said those blacklisted are from 45 countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, the Americas and Australia. In Asia,

the others blacklisted are from Sri Lanka (33), Iran (24), Vietnam (12), Philippines (10) and Kazakhstan (14) and China (9). From Europe, the UK (9) heads the list followed by France (3). And from the African countries, they include Tanzania (8), Algeria (7) and South Africa (4). Four US nationals, and three from Trinidad and Tobago, were blacklisted.

From the first week of March, over 8,000 Tablighi Jamaat activists had gathered at the Alami Markaz in Nizamuddin for a religious event, including about 2,000 foreigners. Following the event, sources said, over 800 went to various parts of the country for proselytising activities.

According to MHA, as of March 21, over 1,000 Tablighi workers from abroad were in various parts of India on March 21, including 216 at the Markaz. At least 125 went to Tamil Nadu followed by UP (132), Haryana (115), Maharashtra (115) and Telangana (82).

## ED considers probing Tabligh financial dealings

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

THE TABLIGHI Jamaat leadership, which has been booked by Delhi Police for violating lockdown orders, could soon face another probe by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The central agency, which investigates offences of money laundering, is examining whether it can register a case against the outfit and its leadership over allegedly dubious financial dealings.

"We are looking at the case registered by Delhi Police in the matter," an ED official said. "We will call for details in due course and examine whether it warrants a case under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Delhi Police is probing their (Tablighi's) finances as part of its

FIR, but we are better equipped to do it since Tablighi Jamaat gets funding from across the world."

An FIR filed by the SHO of Nizamuddin Police Station with Delhi Police's Crime Branch has named seven people, including Maulana Saad, associated with the management committee of Alami Markaz Banglawali Masjid, the organisation's headquarters, for allegedly going ahead with a gathering of around 2,000 people at the mosque in Nizamuddin West despite warnings from agencies.

The FIR has invoked Sections of Epidemic Diseases Act, Disaster Management Act and five Sections of the Indian Penal Code. Barring IPC Section 120B (Criminal Conspiracy), none of the provisions invoked are under PMLA schedule. **FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com**

## 251 new cases with Tablighi link, TN reports 100 in one day

SEVERAL STATES on Friday reported 251 fresh coronavirus cases linked to the Tablighi Jamaat event in Delhi, with a majority of them from Tamil Nadu.

### TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu reported 102 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, and of them 100 are linked to people who attended the congregation in Delhi. The fresh cases pushed the number of positive cases to 411, of which 364 are those who attended the congregation. State health secretary Beela Rajesh said, "A total of 1,200 people who travelled to Delhi in this regard have tested positive, 303 people tested negative and results are pending for some."

### KARNATAKA

Three of the four new cases reported are people who participated in the event, taking the number of COVID-19 cases in the state with links to the congregation to 15. The three new cases are that of a 70-year-old man and two youths in their 20s from Belagavi region. Swab samples of 288 people who reportedly attended the congregation were collected, and of them 187 tested negative and 13 returned positive. "Results for another 88 samples are awaited," Karnataka minister S Suresh Kumar said.

### ASSAM

Four more people, all of whom attended the congregation, tested positive. Of the 20 positive cases, 16 are people who attended the event. Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh had reported one positive case each in connection to the Delhi event. Four family members of the patient in Arunachal Pradesh tested negative, CM Pema Khandu tweeted on Friday.

### UTTAR PRADESH

Forty more people linked to the Tablighi congregation tested positive on Friday. The total number of COVID-19 cases in UP rose to 174, of which 47 are linked to the congregation.

### TELANGANA & ANDHRA

Telangana reported 75 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, all linked to people who attended the congregation. The number of cases in the state reached 229 and the death toll hit 11 on Friday. In

Andhra Pradesh, the number of cases rose to 161 with 12 new cases. The government has decided to add two more testing centres in Guntur and Kadapa.

### PUNJAB

Two persons who attended the congregation tested positive, taking the total number to 12.

### RAJASTHAN

Thirty-two people tested positive in the state and 16 of them had attended the congregation. The total number of cases in the state has reached 168 and 31 of them are linked to the event.

### GUJARAT

A 68-year old man, who was among the seven who tested positive from Ahmedabad Friday, was part of a group of 27 Tablighi Jamaat members who came to Ahmedabad on March 12.

### KERALA

Kerala reported nine fresh cases, and one of them had participated in the congregation. 157 people from Kerala had attended the event, and 3 of them have tested positive so far. The state so far has 295 COVID-19 cases. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan told reporters that the state will start rapid testing and those who test negative will have to continue under observation as chances of such persons testing positive later are ruled out.

### UTTARAKHAND

Six persons linked to Tablighi Jamaat tested positive Friday, increasing the total number of cases in the state to 16. As many as 296 Tablighi Jamaat followers are in quarantine in the state.

### MAHARASHTRA

Of 1,225 people from Maharashtra who visited the Tablighi Jamaat event, three new positive cases were reported on Monday, taking the total positive cases linked to event to 7. Across Maharashtra, 738 people who attended the event in Nizamuddin have been placed under quarantine. In Mumbai alone, 127 people have been traced and of them 105 were tested between Thursday and Friday. Health officials said that 192 people who had gone to the meet couldn't be tracked.

## Back amid lockdown, stranded fishermen spend days in vessels

IRAM SIDDIQUE MUMBAI, APRIL 3

AMID the uncertainty unleashed by COVID-19, the shallow waters around the coast of Mumbai have become a safe haven for 41-year-old Kishore Patil.

"It is better to stay in the sea than to get beaten up by police on the way back home," said Patil, reassuring his wife of his safety after the phone, as he remains holed up in a wooden trawler with eight others a kilometre into the sea at Uran. Close to 4,000 migrant workers like Patil who work on fishing boats are now staying on trawlers and smaller boats anchored at sea along the western coast of Maharashtra after the sudden imposition of the lockdown caught them off guard.

Patil, who works as a fisherman in a trawler with nine others, reached Ferry Wharf in Mumbai on March 22 with his catch after 15 days at the sea. By then, Janata Curfew had kicked in. That was followed by the Maharashtra lockdown and then the nationwide lockdown that made the journey back home in Raigad impossible.

Rajesh Kale, who owns the boat on which Patil works, stocked it with 15 days of supplies and asked his men to stay put. "We live in small houses in Mumbai and do not have enough space for them. So, it was safer for them to stay on the boats. They call me once in two days if they need anything," said Kale, who sent both the boats to Mora in

Uran where they are usually parked during the off seasons.

The calls are not frequent, as the phones can be charged only when the boat's engine is on. That consumes a lot of fuel, so charging a phone is a luxury.

Ramdas Sunde, Chairman of Maharashtra State Fisheries Co-operative Limited, said at least 4,000 workers, comprising nearly 25 per cent of those who work on 20,000-odd mechanised and non-mechanised fishing boats, are at sea currently.

Kale has had to suffer a loss of nearly Rs 1.5 lakh, as there were no takers for the catch at Ferry Wharf, Sasoan Dock and the wholesale fish market at CSMT.

Chairman of Purse Seine Fishermen Welfare Association, Ganesh Nakhwa, blamed the government for doing little to help the fishermen. "The government started shutting offices since March 13 but did not intimate the fishermen to not send boats out in the sea. When they returned, the lockdown was in place, and with no possibility of any export, these fishermen had to dump their catch into the sea," said Nakhwa.

"The government should give out relief packages to the fishermen along with farmers," he said.

For now, the only hope the fishermen have is the Centre has asked for a list of those stranded at sea. "We have been asked to give a list of the fishermen in the state, who have been affected... we have given it. A similar list was asked after the cyclones, but no relief was given," said Sunde.



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami serves food to stranded migrant workers at a community hall in Chennai.

## TN man walking home from Maharashtra dies in Hyderabad

ARUN JANARDHANAN CHENNAI, APRIL 3

A 23-YEAR-OLD man from Tamil Nadu's Namakkal district died in Hyderabad on Wednesday night after he had walked about 500 km from Wardha in Maharashtra. He was walking home amid the lockdown with about a dozen others when police stopped them and moved them to a shelter in Hyderabad.

The Namakkal administration has received information that B Logesh reportedly died of a heart attack due to dehydration and exhaustion. At the time, he was at the shelter. As per that information, he had walked the entire distance from Wardha to Hyderabad, except small stretches when he travelled on trucks.

According to the Namakkal district collector's office, Logesh's father works as a watchman and his mother at a garment mill. He had been working with a private company in Nagpur for the past two months.

Logesh reportedly left Nagpur on March 30. Local residents had informed police about the movement of Logesh and a dozen people on the highway on April 1. He died after police and revenue officials shifted them to a shelter in West Marredpally in Hyderabad.

At the shelter, after having a bath and eating dinner, Logesh collapsed and fell unconscious. He was taken to the hospital, where he was declared brought dead, said a senior official of the Namakkal district administration.

Against the initial plan to bury his body in Hyderabad due to travel restrictions, the state administration in Hyderabad intervened and made arrangements to take his body to his native place in Namakkal in an ambulance, over 800 km away. The body reached his home on Friday.

According to preliminary information, the people who walked with Logesh have said he left Nagpur after he was forced to vacate the place where he was staying with others after the 21-day lockdown was announced.

## Will enforce lockdown more stringently: CM

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami on Thursday warned that the state government would enforce the lockdown restrictions more stringently considering reports that people are flouting norms in many places.

The Chief Minister said the government will deliver the cash support declared for the weaker sections — an amount of Rs 1,000 — at doorsteps along with the tokens for free ration.

He said it is the responsibility of people to follow these orders. "A few don't listen at all. Law will take its course from now on. We have extended as much cooperation as possible, but if the people fail to utilise it, there is no choice but to enforce the order stringently," he said. **ENS**



The team that was attacked in Indore is now back at work

mob has no religion; you can't reason with it."

Katdare said they managed to somehow get into a car brought closer to the area of ruckus by tehsildar Charanjit Hudda.

Syed said the team's routine was to paste "DO NOT VISIT" posters on the quarantined

homes. "They had cooperated with us on the previous days. My husband and two children (aged five and nine) were very scared..."

Asked what prompted the team to return to the same locality on Thursday evening, this time with senior administrative and police officials, Syed said, "Hum

frontline workers hai. Hum hi darr jayenge to kaam kaun karega (If we, the frontline workers, get scared, who will work?)"

On Thursday, she said, the locals apologised, although it came after the administration arrested seven attackers and booked four of them under the stringent NSA. CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan and the collector had warned of strict action. Besides, Indore's shahar qazi (city cleric) was with the team and told residents that they had brought a bad name not just to the community but also to Indore.

Hudda said he got some clarity on the reason behind the attack on Thursday when he met Mubarak, a resident they were looking for — misinformation. "I was scared because I was told if I go with the team I will be injected with the virus and I will test positive," Hudda recalled Mubarak telling him.

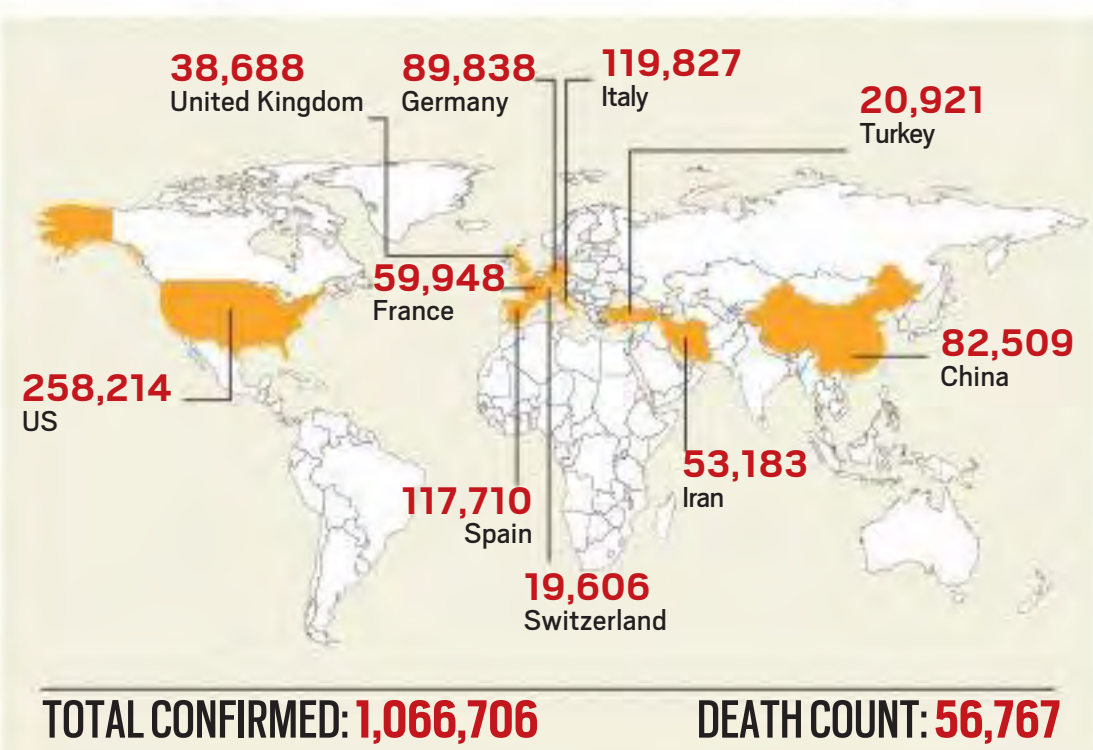
## MP bureaucrat tests positive

Bhopal: A Madhya Pradesh bureaucrat who was one of the key persons responsible for supply of drugs, equipment and logistics in the state's fight against COVID-19 has tested positive for the infection, triggering a scare among several other bureaucrats, junior officials and others. The official involved with Madhya Pradesh Public Health Services Corporation Limited was in isolation since Wednesday after he developed symptoms. So far, Madhya Pradesh has reported 127 COVID-19 cases and eight deaths. **ENS**





**CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK**  
 YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED DAILY



Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11:30 pm on April 2

**Should you wash your clothes every time you return home?**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**

WHEN SOMEONE returns from outdoors, is it essential to wash their clothes? While it always helps to wash your clothes if you can, you might want to weigh the need against the risk — or what is known of it — of not doing so.

The novel coronavirus probably survives on fabric for some time, although no research has been done on how long that is. Generally, viruses tend to last longer on non-porous surfaces (steel, plastic etc) than for a shorter time on porous surfaces (which include clothes).

The risk of infected clothes depends on where you went. At highest risk are healthcare professionals who deal with COVID-19 patients, and the government has guidelines including on washing their clothes. Dr Tanu Singhal, infectious disease expert, said, "It is assumed a detergent kills the virus when clothes are washed."

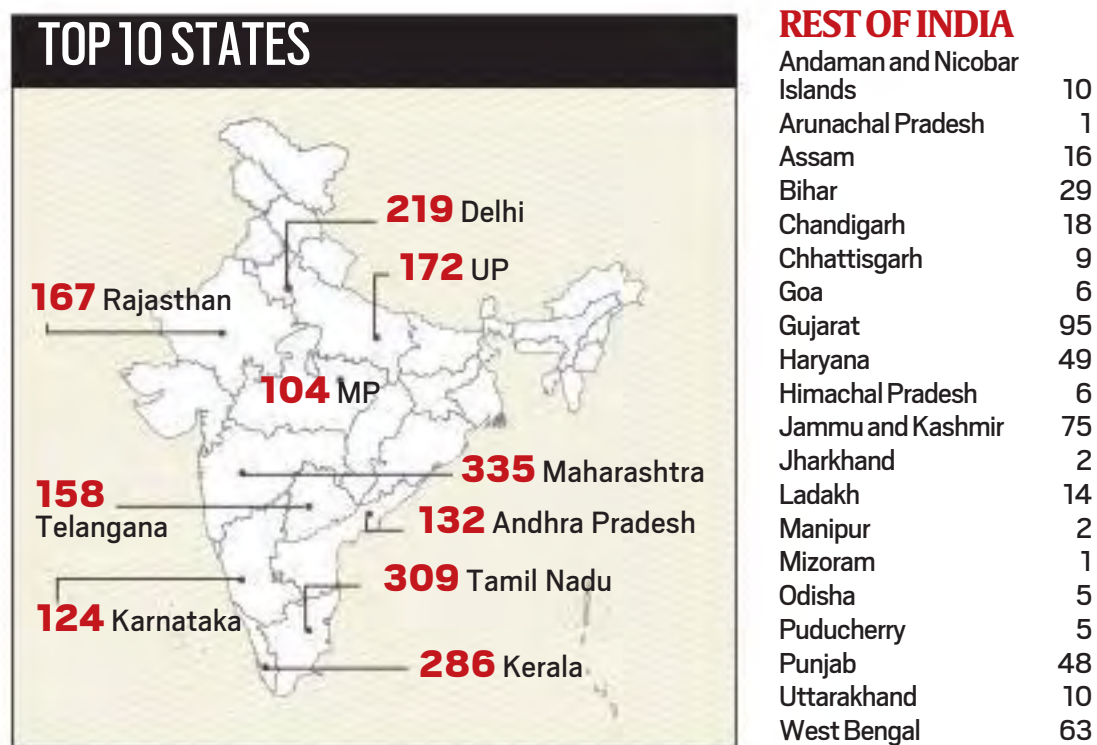
As of now, the general population in India is seen as being at low risk because widespread community trans-

mission has not yet begun. So, if you stepped out, return and change but leave your outdoor clothes unwashed, it may be safe to wear the same clothes the next time you step out. This is provided you have not kept wiping their unwashed hands against these clothes. And if you are a healthcare worker, repeating unwashed clothes is not safe.

Should such clothes be washed separately? If you stepped out to buy groceries, it is probably safe to wash those clothes together with everyone else's. If you travel out often, you should use a separate towel. If you travel frequently to high-risk clusters, to hospitals or quarantine facilities, you should wash clothes separately.

The government guidelines advise that if a person is suspected to have symptoms of COVID-19, his or her clothes must be separately washed wearing gloves to avoid contamination. In Kasturba Hospital, the nodal isolation facility for patients in Mumbai, staff go home, bathe and wash their clothes in warm water separately from other laundry as a precaution against transmission.

**INDIA COUNT: 2,547 (62 DEATHS)**



Union Health Ministry update at 11 pm, April 3. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states with most cases are listed above. 163 PATIENTS DISCHARGED IN 19 STATES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

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

**SIMPLY PUT**

**New debate over old vaccine**

Used for ages against TB, the BCG vaccine is newly under the spotlight. One study claims a link between low COVID-19 spread and wide BCG coverage, another dismisses it. A look at BCG, and the new discussion

**ABANTIKA GHOSH**  
 NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

FOR MILLIONS growing up in India until the 1960s (when the smallpox vaccine came), BCG was the only vaccine — one that literally introduced the concept of vaccines in the country. A limited rollout started in 1948 in a bid to lower the tuberculosis burden, and went on to be expanded across the country. Does this ages-old BCG vaccine also protect against the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV2)? That is a question the scientific community worldwide has been discussing over the past few days, ever since a study pending peer review made the claim, and another set of researchers then refuted it. A look at the vaccine, and the arguments in the two studies:

**The vaccine, its background**

The *Bacillus Calmette-Guérin* (BCG) vaccine is a live attenuated strain derived from an isolate of *Mycobacterium bovis* and has been used widely across the world as a vaccine for tuberculosis. A live attenuated vaccine means that it uses a pathogen whose potency as a disease producer has been artificially disabled, but whose essential identifying characters, which help the body mount an immune response to it, have been left unchanged.

India's tryst with BCG vaccine is also the story of how vaccines entered post-independence India. In a 2014 article in the *Indian Journal of Medical Research* on a 'Brief History of Vaccines and Vaccinations in India', Dr Chandrakant Lahariya, who is associated with the World Health Organization, wrote: "In May 1948, the Government of India issued a press note stating that tuberculosis was 'assuming epidemic proportions' in the country, and that it had 'after careful consideration' decided to introduce BCG vaccination on a limited scale and under strict supervision as a measure to control the disease. A BCG Vaccine Laboratory at King Institute, Guindy, Madras (Chennai), Tamil Nadu, was set up in 1948. In August 1948, the first BCG vaccinations were conducted in India. The work on BCG had started in India as a pilot project in two centres in 1948."

By 1955-56, the mass campaign had covered all states of India. BCG remains part of the basket of vaccines included in the Universal Immunisation Programme.



BCG vaccine, started in India as a pilot project in two centres in 1948, went into mass coverage by 1955-56 and remains part of the current Universal Immunisation Programme. Representational photo. Express Archive

**COVID-19 link, as claimed**

Researchers from the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) analysed the global spread of COVID-19, correlated it with data from the world BCG Atlas that shows which countries have BCG vaccine coverage, and came to the conclusion that countries with a policy for universal BCG vaccination have had a lower number of cases than those like the US, where universal BCG vaccination was discontinued after the incidence of TB came down, and Italy.

"Italy, where the COVID-19 mortality is very high, never implemented universal BCG vaccination. On the other hand, Japan had one of the early cases of COVID-19 but it has maintained a low mortality rate despite not implementing the most strict forms of social isolation. Japan (has) been implementing BCG vaccination since 1947. Iran had also been heavily hit by COVID-19 and it started its universal BCG vaccination policy only in 1984 potentially leaving anybody over 36 years old unprotected. Why did COVID-19 spread in China despite having a universal BCG policy since the 1950s? During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), tuberculo-

sis prevention and treatment agencies were disbanded and weakened. We speculate that this could have created a pool of potential hosts that would be affected by and spread COVID-19. Currently, however, the situation in China seems to be improving," wrote the researchers from the NYIT's department of biomedical sciences.

The researchers claimed that the vaccine is reported to provide immunity against a large number of respiratory diseases. They however advocated randomised control trials with the vaccine to see the extent of immunity it can provide against the novel coronavirus, which was not known to the world until December 2019.

"BCG vaccination has been shown to produce broad protection against viral infections and sepsis, raising the possibility that the protective effect of BCG might be not directly related to actions on COVID-19 but on associated co-occurring infections or sepsis. However, we also found that BCG vaccination was correlated with a reduction in the number of COVID-19 reported infections in a country suggesting that BCG might confer some protection specifically against COVID-

19," the NYIT researchers wrote.

**Critique of the claim**

Within days of the NYIT study, researchers from the McGill International TB Centre, Montreal wrote out a critique, questioning among other things its methodology, the extent of COVID-19 spread globally at the time the study was conducted, and some of the presumptions made. They questioned the premise that a correlation essentially is one of cause and effect without any other possible explanation.

They wrote: "There is danger in citing that there is evidence that a century-old vaccine may boost immunity in individuals, providing non-specific protection to other illnesses, and by extension protecting against COVID-19 or reducing severity of its presentation based on this analysis alone. Accepting these findings at face value has the potential for complacency in response to the pandemic, particularly in LMICs (low and middle-income countries). One needs only to look at how this has been portrayed in news outlets of several LMICs already; the dangers of such portrayals misinforming the public should not be underestimated, for example, in countries such as India, the wide BCG coverage offered by their universal vaccination policy may create a false sense of security and lead to inaction."

One of the contentions the McGill researchers make is that by the time the NYIT analysis was done, the spread of COVID-19 had not really happened in the LMICs. It happened later. "For example, COVID-19 cases in India have increased from 195 on March 21 to 1,071 on March 31. In South Africa, cases have increased from 205 on March 21 to 1,326 on March 31," they noted. India's cases crossed 2,500 on Friday.

Said Dr K S Reddy, public health expert and president of the Public Health Foundation of India: "Inter-country comparisons of longstanding and uninterrupted national programmes of BCG vaccination suggest a benefit in reducing the severity of the COVID-19 epidemic, in contrast to those who do not have such programmes or started late. There is no direct antiviral effect but BCG could be an immunopotentiator which enables the body to resist the virus better. However, correlation is not proof of causation and we need stronger evidence which may be forthcoming in prevention trials started in some countries."

**In lockdown, the laws that come into play**

**SOFIAHSAN**  
 SRINAGAR, APRIL 3

DURING THE lockdown, Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code has been widely invoked against those not following it. In a communication to the states on March 24, the Home Ministry said persons violating the containment measures will be liable to be punished under provisions of the Disaster Management Act 2005, besides Section 188 IPC. A look at these and related provisions:

**For disobedience**

Section 188 IPC deals with those disobeying an order passed by a public servant, and provides for imprisonment ranging from one to six months. For those violating orders passed under the Epidemic Diseases Act, Section 188 IPC is the provision under which punishment is awarded. Section 51 of the Disaster Management

Act, 2005 provides for punishment for two kinds of offences: obstructing any officer or employee of the government or person authorised by any disaster management authority for discharge of a function; and refusing to comply with any direction given by the authorities under the Act. Punishment can extend to one year on conviction, or two years if the refusal leads to loss of lives or any imminent danger.

**For spreading fear**

Section 505 IPC provides for imprisonment of three years or fine, or both, for those who publish or circulate anything which is likely to cause fear or alarm. Section 54 of the Disaster Management Act provides for imprisonment, extending to one year, of those who make or circulate a false alarm or warning regarding a disaster or its severity or magnitude.

**For false claim to aid**

Under Section 52, Disaster Management

Act, whoever makes a false claim for obtaining "any relief, assistance, repair, reconstruction or other benefits" from any official authority can be sentenced to a maximum of two years imprisonment and a fine will be imposed on the person.

**For refusing to do duties**

In case of refusal or withdrawal of any officer who has been tasked with any duty under the Act, the officer can be sentenced to imprisonment extending to one year. However, those who have written permission of the superior or any lawful ground are exempt from such punishment. A case cannot be initiated without the explicit sanction from the state or central government.

**For refusing to help**

Any authorised authority under the Act can requisite resources like persons and material resources, premises like land or building, or sheds and vehicles for rescue opera-

tions. Though there is a provision for compensation under the Act, any person who disobeys such an order can be sentenced to imprisonment up to one year.

**Legal shield**

For any offence under the Disaster Management Act, a court will take cognisance only if the complaint is filed by the national or state or district authority, or the central or state government. However, there is another provision: if a person has given notice of 30 days or more about an alleged offence, and about his intention to file a complaint, he or she can approach the court which can then take cognisance.

The Act protects government officers and employees from any legal process for actions they took "in good faith". Under the Epidemic Diseases Act too, no suit or other legal proceedings can lie against any person for anything done or intended to be done under good faith.

**Medical masks, home-made masks, and what is recommended for whom**

**AMITABH SINHA**  
 PUNE, APRIL 3

EARLIER THIS week, the office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the government issued a detailed manual on how to make home-made masks and recommended it to everyone, especially those living in densely populated areas, to protect themselves from novel coronavirus disease. This was the first time that masks were being officially recommended for everyone, even for those who were not infected or were not in close contact with anyone infected.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had earlier said that everyone "need not" wear masks. That instruction still stands. The World Health Organization (WHO) has a similar standing recommendation, that non-infected persons should wear masks only if they are caring for sick ones. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has the same recommendation, though it is being reconsidered now.

**How do masks help?**

By covering the nose and mouth, masks reduce the possibility of the virus getting

inside the respiratory tract. SARS-CoV2, the virus behind COVID-19 disease, is being transmitted through air droplets that are released, for example, when an infected person coughs. Recent research published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* said the virus could remain in the air for up to three hours. The virus is also known to survive on plastic, steel and copper surfaces for several hours, and there is a risk in people touching these surfaces and then touching their mouth or nose. A mask can be handy in these kind of circumstances as well.

The virus is also being spread by asymptomatic patients. As such, in public places, one cannot be sure whether an infected person is in close proximity or not.

**So, what explains the previous advice against wearing masks?**

The main reason is to ensure that there is no run on the professional quality masks that are needed by healthcare professionals, who are at maximum risk because of their proximity to infected patients. As it is, there is a severe shortage of professional masks globally, because of the huge demand.

The advice had come at a time when the virus was not known to stay in the air for



Workers in Chennai stitch masks for police personnel on Thursday. PTI

any significant amount of time. It was only in March that research was published showing that the novel coronavirus can indeed survive in the air for up to three hours. Until then, only patients, especially those who were prone to coughing, and those caring for a patient, like family members or

healthcare professionals, were advised to wear masks. The general public was discouraged from wearing them. Now, the latest research is forcing a rethink.

**How effective are professional masks?**

The one in great demand is called N95,

so named because it is able to block at least 95% of particles in the air that are of the size 0.3 microns or bigger (1 micron is a millionth of a metre). A single SARS-CoV2 virus is typically up to 0.2 microns in size, so it can possibly penetrate the N95 mask. But as Arnab Bhattacharya, a professor and Chair of Public Outreach at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Mumbai, points out, the virus is enclosed in air droplets that are much bigger in size. "What is getting spread are droplets, which are a few microns in size. Though there is a size distribution, it is very unlikely that there are droplets that are less than 0.3 microns in size. So that way the N95 is a very good barrier to virus entry," he says.

Bhattacharya said N95s are much better than the typical surgical masks worn by medical staff whose main purpose is to keep out large droplets of wearer's saliva from going out, for example during a surgery.

**What about home-made masks?**

Home-made masks might not be as effective in blocking outside particles as professional masks, but they are nonetheless better than not having a mask at all. Simple masks made of cotton cloth do keep out

larger particles. And these can be washed and reused multiple times.

**So what is the latest recommendation?**

The manual issued by the office of the Principal Scientific Adviser strongly recommends that people wear home-made masks, though it does point out that this might not be sufficient. "Masks are effective only when used in combination with frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water," it says, quoting the WHO. It says use of clean masks "will be vital" to stopping the spread of the virus, and adds that these were "especially recommended for people living in densely populated areas across India".

The manual says a home-made double-layered mask made of 100 per cent cotton cloth was 70 per cent as effective as a surgical mask in blocking small particles, even those that are five times smaller than the novel coronavirus.

While the general advisories of the Health Ministry and the WHO remain unchanged, the CDC in the US was expected to advise all Americans to start wearing cloth masks in public spaces, according to a report in *The New York Times* on Friday.



# 10 THE OUTBREAK THE WORLD

**PANDEMIC WATCH**



**FRANCE**  
Google to publish user location data

Paris: Google says it will publish users' location data around the world from Friday to allow governments to gauge the effectiveness of social distancing measures, brought in to stem the COVID-19 pandemic. The reports on users' movements in 131 countries will be made available on a special website and will "chart movement trends over time by geography", according to a post on one of Google's blogs. Trends will display "a percentage point increase or decrease in visits" to locations like parks, shops, homes and places of work, not "the absolute number of visits," said the post.

**SRI LANKA**  
Election in constitutional impasse

Colombo: The parliamentary polls in Sri Lanka cannot be held before the end of May due to the coronavirus pandemic, the election commission said on Friday, expressing concern that the situation could lead to a constitutional impasse as the new Parliament must meet within three months of dissolution. Mahinda Deshapriya, chief of the Independent Elections Commission, said it appeared now the election cannot be held and the new Parliament would not be able to meet on or before June 2, and that "this will cause a conflict with article 70 of the Constitution".

**NIGERIA**  
Man shot dead for violating lockdown rule

Warri: A Nigerian man has been shot dead for allegedly flouting a stay-at-home order aimed at curbing the spread of coronavirus, police and a lawmaker said on Friday. Nigeria has introduced a raft of measures, including lockdowns of major cities, to try to contain the virus, which has infected 184 people, two of them fatally. Joseph Pessu, a resident of the oil city of Warri in Delta, was killed on Thursday by a soldier deployed to enforce the lockdown, the sources said. "The incident occurred yesterday with the youths protesting," a state police spokesman said.

**ONE MILLION CONFIRMED CASES**  
recorded worldwide so far

**DEATH TOLL CROSSES 50,000**  
with Italy still recording the most fatalities

**US, SPAIN, BRITAIN SEE HIGHEST**  
one-day death counts till date

# Half the world told to stay home

Spain reports over 900 deaths for second day; experts warn 1 mn cases only 'small proportion' of real figure

**AGENCIES**  
APRIL 3

THE NUMBER of confirmed coronavirus deaths accelerated past 50,000 on Friday as the United States, Spain and Britain grappled with their highest tolls yet and the world economy took a massive hit. Nearly four billion people on the planet — half of humanity — found themselves on Friday under some sort of order to stay in their homes. The human scale of the pandemic has never been more stark — experts warning that more than one million cases of COVID-19 disease confirmed globally is probably only a small proportion of total infections as testing is still not widely available. The United States accounts for around a quarter of confirmed cases but Europe is far from being out of danger — Spain reported more than 900 deaths in 24 hours on Friday, for the second day running. The virus has now killed more 10,000 people across Spain, but not 29-year-old Javier Lara, who has just returned home after being treated in an overburdened intensive care unit. "I was panicking that my daughter would get infected. When I started showing symptoms, I said I wouldn't hold her or go near her, or change her nappies," he told AFP, describing his fear for his eight-week-old after facing death at the "worst moment in his life". While Italy still leads the world in fatalities, France, Belgium and Britain have also been hard hit. German Chancellor Angela Merkel left her Berlin home for the first time in almost two weeks on Friday after she was quarantined following contact with an infected doctor. Research on the prevention

**Deaths likely undercounted: German official**

Berlin: The head of Germany's disease control agency says the number of people who die of COVID-19 is likely being undercounted. Lothar Wieler of the Robert Koch Institute said Friday that he believes "we have more dead than are officially being reported." It wasn't immediately clear whether Wieler was suggesting that deaths are being undercounted only in Germany, or worldwide, and reporters were unable to ask follow-up questions during his online news conference. Germany's low death rate from coronavirus has drawn international attention. **AP**



Volunteers at a disinfection drive in Wuhan. The city has announced plans to resume 100 passenger trains from April 8 even as officials asked residents to stay at home and avoid non-essential outings amid fears of a possible rebound. **Reuters**

**VIRUS IS SPREAD BY RESPIRATORY DROPLETS: WHO**

THE CORONAVIRUS is primarily transmitted through 'respiratory droplets and close contacts', and does not seem to stay long in the air, a WHO paper said

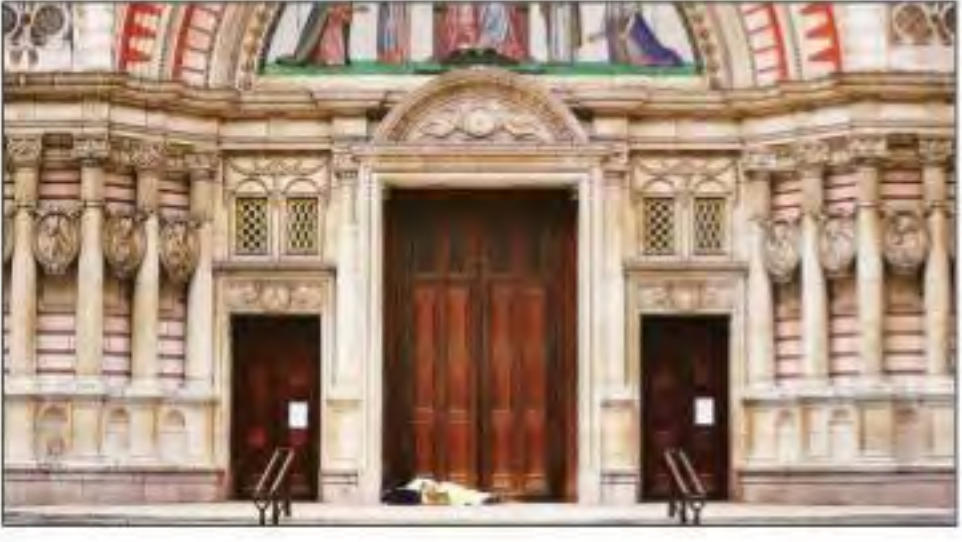
**SUCH TRANSMISSION** occurs when you have close contact (1 metre) with a person who has respiratory symptoms such as coughing or sneezing, potentially spreading the droplets

**AIRBORNE SPREAD** is different as it refers to the presence of microbes within droplet nuclei, which can remain in the air longer and be spread over a greater distance

## Toll up by 684, UK races for 'immunity passport'

**NEW YORK TIMES**  
APRIL 3

Britain is drawing up plans to issue an "immunity passport" for key workers that would certify those who have recovered from coronavirus — and carry antibodies identifiable by a blood test — that would allow them to resume a normal working life. Although in its early stages, the idea could form part of a broader exit strategy from the countrywide lockdown, once the spread of the disease has been brought under control. Britain on Friday reported a record 684 new COVID-19 deaths in its daily update, as the number of confirmed cases of coronavirus climbed by 4,450 on the previous 24 hours, as per an AFP report. "We have a stream of work



A homeless person sleeps in a doorway at Westminster Cathedral in London on Friday. **Reuters**

underway on immunity," the health secretary, Matthew Hancock, told the BBC on Friday. "We are potentially having immunity certificates so that if people have been through it and when the science is clear about the point at which they are then immune, people can then start getting back to normal." Prince Charles, the heir to the British throne, opened the country's newest and largest hospital on Friday, with a capacity for 4,000 beds. Prince Charles, who earlier this week ended self-isolation following his own diagnosis, opened the hospital via a video link from Scotland. Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who said last week that he had contracted the coronavirus, still has symptoms. "In my own case, although

**EXPLAINED**  
**Plan contingent on testing immunity to coronavirus**

THE QUESTION about allowing frontline workers who have recovered from the virus to resume their duties has been a key one for many nations. However, the feasibility of such a decision is contingent on developing a test that is capable of identifying whether people who were exposed to the virus are likely to be immune to it. Furthermore, given the number of people that medical staff encounter on a daily basis, the test would have to have a high level of accuracy and reliability to be effective in aiding such an initiative.

I'm feeling better and I have done my seven days of isolation, alas, I still have one of the minor symptoms... a temperature, so in accordance with government advice, I must continue my self-isolation until that symptom itself goes," he said, as per AFP.

## Show more unity, ambition, courage: Italy PM tells EU

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
ROME, APRIL 3

ITALIAN PRIME Minister Giuseppe Conte Friday extended his feud about coronavirus money with EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen in the pages of a Roman newspaper. Conte wrote a letter to Italy's La Repubblica in response to an apology that von der Leyen had published in the same paper on Thursday. "I am sorry," von der Leyen had told Italians. "The EU is with you now." Conte sounded unimpressed in his letter. "Dear Ursula," he wrote. "I hear ideas (from you) not worthy of Europe." He told her it was time for the EU "to show more ambition, more unity and more courage." Conte wants the EU to start issuing lots of joint debt — dubbed "coronabonds" — that could let countries such as Italy address the crisis more cheaply. Von der Leyen is backing an



In Naples on Friday. **Reuters**

EU-wide guarantee that could raise 100 billion euros (\$108 billion) to aid strained national unemployment schemes. She told Italians said these EU-backed loans were "demonstrating European solidarity". Conte said he "welcomed" the EU's unemployment initiative. But Conte also made it clear that he still wanted the coronabonds. "When fighting a war, you must do everything possible to win and equip yourself with all the tools needed for the (subsequent) reconstruction," he wrote.

## Stay indoors, practice social distancing, says Trump; expert says national lockdown needed

**AGENCIES**  
WASHINGTON, APRIL 3

THE US is at a "very critical" phase in its fight against COVID-19, President Donald Trump has said, advising Americans to stay indoors and practise social distancing for the next four weeks to win the war against the rapidly-spreading coronavirus pandemic. More than 305 million out of the total 330 million Americans are staying indoors as the US battles to contain the spread of the coronavirus which has infected over 235,000 people and claimed 5,800 lives in the country, the White House has said. We are in a very critical phase of our war against the coronavirus; it is vital that every American follows our guidelines on the 30 days to slow the spread. The sacrifices we make over the next four weeks will have countless American lives saved," Trump told reporters



The line at a drive-thru food pantry in Michigan. **AP**

during his daily White House news conference on Thursday. Dr Anthony Fauci, the nation's leading infectious disease expert, said that he believed that a nationwide lockdown order made sense. "You know, the tension between federally mandated versus states' rights to do what they want is something I don't want to get into," he told CNN on Thursday. "But if you look at what's going on in this country, I just don't understand why we're not doing that." He previously told *The Times* that while he liked "clarity of message," he hoped that states would take the actions themselves.

## Australian PM urges WHO, UN to act against China's wet markets

**NATASHA CHAKU**  
MELBOURNE, APRIL 3

AUSTRALIAN PRIME Minister Scott Morrison on Friday urged the WHO and the UN to act against China's wet markets, like the one where the deadly coronavirus is thought to have originated, as they pose "great risks" to the health and wellbeing of the rest of the world. A wet market in the central Chinese city of Wuhan is believed to be the source of the coronavirus pandemic that began in December last year, crossing from animals to humans. Stating that China based "Wet markets were a very real and significant problem wherever they exist," Morrison in an interview to a news channel on Thursday, said "this virus started in China and went round the world. And that's that's how it started." "We all know that. And these wet markets can be a real problem when it comes to what can

**No economic support for intl students: PM**

Melbourne: Australia Friday refused to offer any economic support to international students who were unable to support themselves in the crisis with Prime Minister Scott Morrison saying the country must focus at present on its citizens and residents. "If they are not in a position to support themselves then there is the alternative for them to return to their home countries..." he said.

occur in those markets. And I think from a world health point of view, this is something the World Health Organisation should do something about. I mean, all this money that comes out of the UN and World Health Organisation," he said. **PTI**

**OTHER TOP GLOBAL STORIES**

## PAK COURT OVERTURNS CONVICTION OF OMAR SHEIKH Affront to victims of terrorism: US court on Pearl verdict

**LALIT K JHA**  
WASHINGTON, APRIL 3

THE US Friday criticised a Pakistani court for overturning the death sentence of British-born top al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, who was convicted in the abduction and murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl, terming the verdict an "affront" to victims of terrorism everywhere. The US' response comes after the Sindh High Court on Thursday found the 46-year-old Sheikh guilty of the lesser charge of kid-



Danny Pearl. **AP/File**

napping and commuted his death sentence to seven years in prison. "The overturning of the convictions for Daniel Pearl's murder is an affront to victims of terrorism everywhere," Alice Wells, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, said in a tweet. Congressman Eliot Engel, Chairman of the powerful House Foreign Affairs Committee said he was deeply concerned by Pakistan court's overturning of convictions for the abduction and killing of Pearl. "It's critical Pakistan demonstrate a real commitment to addressing its longstanding terrorism problem by holding those involved accountable," Engel tweeted. **PTI**

**Pakistan invokes Maintenance of Public Order to keep convicts in jail**

Karachi: Pakistan's Sindh province government Friday invoked the Maintenance of Public Order to keep in jail al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh. The Sindh government acted swiftly to invoke the MPO which allows it to keep the four convicts behind bars for three months. According to a notification, the release of Sheikh and his three associates could jeopardise the law and order situation, thus necessitating their continued detention. Talking to *Geo News*, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said he was surprised at the timing of the verdict. **PTI**

## Bill Withers, who sang 'Lean on Me' and 'Ain't No Sunshine', dies at 81

**DERRICK BRYSON TAYLOR**  
NEW YORK, APRIL 3

BILL WITHERS, the soul singer behind 1970s hits like "Lean on Me," "Lovely Day" and "Ain't No Sunshine," died on Monday in Los Angeles, his family said. He was 81. Withers, a three-time Grammy winner, died from heart complications, his family told *The Associated Press*. "We are devastated by the loss of our beloved, devoted husband



Three-time Grammy winner Bill Withers. **NYT**

and father," the family's statement said. "A solitary man with a heart driven to connect to the world at large, with his poetry and music, he spoke honestly to people and connected them to each other." The family added, "in this difficult time, we pray his music offers comfort and entertainment as fans hold tight to loved ones." Withers was well into his 30s when he began recording music, after growing up in a segregated coal-mining town in West Virginia, serving in the Navy and working as an aircraft mechanic. But during his 14-year recording career, starting with the album "Just As I Am" in 1971, he wrote and performed songs that have become anthems around the world, drawn from gritty blues, R&B and the era's confessional style of lyrics. **NYT**



# ECONOMY

<b>GOLD</b>	<b>RUPEE</b>	<b>OIL</b>	<b>SILVER</b>
₹41,705	₹76.13	\$26.15	₹38,100

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

SENSEX: 27,590.95 ▼674.36 NIFTY: 8,083.80 ▼170.00 NIKKEI: 17,820.19 ▲147 HANG SENG: 23,236.11 ▼43.95 FTSE: 5,446.04 ▼34.18 DAX: 9,595.79 ▲24.97

International market data till 1900 IST

## SLOWDOWN, COVID-19 PANDEMIC TAKE A TOLL

# First time in 20 yrs: Direct tax mop-up declines by over 8%

ANANCHAL MAGAZINE  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

AMID THE ongoing economic slowdown, the government's net direct tax collections have missed the downward revised target for 2019-20 by Rs 1.42 lakh crore at Rs 10,27,653 crore, a decline of over 8 per cent from previous year's receipts. The contraction in direct tax collections in the financial year, coming just ahead of the COVID-19 spread in India and resultant lockdown impacting business operations across the country, has been witnessed after a gap of 20 years. The Centre's direct tax receipts had last seen a year-on-year decline in 1998-99, when collections recorded a contraction of 3.5 per cent in that financial year.

THE DIP IN THE CITIES		
	NET COLLECTION (₹ CRORE)	% CHANGE
Mumbai	3,20,180	(-)12.0
Delhi	1,46,272	(-)9.0
Bengaluru	1,09,399	(-)10.1
Chennai	71,338	(-)5.0
Kanpur	24,086	(-)17.1
Hyderabad	56,911	(-)1.9
Kolkata	40,806	(-)6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,27,653</b>	<b>(-)8.0</b>

\*Includes data for all 18 zones across the country

Bengaluru and Delhi recorded a slide of 10.1 per cent and 9 per cent in collections, respectively. Kanpur and Bhubaneswar posted the steepest fall of over 17 per cent each among the 18 tax zones across the country.

In the Budget for 2020-21, presented in February, the govern-

ment had revised the FY20 growth target for direct taxes to 2.9 per cent in the revised estimates from the initial 17.5 per cent in Budget estimate. With this low level of tax collections, the targeted growth rate for the direct tax targets for the current financial year is now at 28.3 per cent, a sharp jump over the assumed growth rate of 12.7 per cent at the time of the presentation of the Budget.

On the indirect tax side too, the government has already missed its Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections target. A drop of 7.8 per cent in returns filing over last month, 4 per cent fall over last year in domestic revenue, and a sharp 23 per cent contraction in revenue from imports led to the fall in GST collections in March below the Rs 1 lakh crore mark, with the Centre missing its RE for 2019-20 by Rs 22,204 crore at Rs 5.90 lakh crore.

With slippages on the tax front, the government is likely to miss its revised fiscal deficit target of 3.8 per cent for 2019-20. As per the latest available data, the government's fiscal deficit during April-February increased to 135.2 per cent of the revised estimate for the fiscal year 2019-20.

## Centre releases ₹17,287 cr to states to aid fight against virus

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

AMID DEMANDS by states to release higher grants and relaxation in their borrowing limits, the Centre Friday released a total of Rs 17,287 crore in grants to states to enhance their financial resources during the COVID-19 crisis.

A total of Rs 11,092 crore has been released by the Centre towards State Disaster Response Mitigation Fund (SDRMF) to all states. Another Rs 6,195 crore has been released as post-devolution revenue deficit grant to 14 states — Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. The revenue deficit grant is based on recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission.

Funds being transferred to states under SDRMF include Rs 1,611 crore to Maharashtra, Rs 966.50 crore to Uttar Pradesh, Rs

**The Centre contributes 75 per cent of SDRMF allocation for general category states/UTs and 90 per cent for special category states/UTs**

910 crore to Madhya Pradesh, Rs 708 crore to Bihar, Rs 802 crore to Odisha, Rs 740.50 crore to Rajasthan, Rs 559.50 crore to Andhra Pradesh, Rs 505.50 crore to West Bengal, Rs 247.50 crore to Punjab. The SDRMF is the primary fund available with states for responses to notified disasters. Last month, the Centre declared COVID-19 as a notified disaster.

The central government contributes 75 per cent of SDRMF allocation for general category states/UTs and 90 per cent for special category states/UTs, which include Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir. The central government releases its annual contribution in

two equal instalments under the Fund. In a video conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday, many states sought extra grants and leeway in fiscal deficit limit to help combat the economic effects of COVID-19.

For the last fiscal, the Centre allowed states to borrow an additional amount of Rs 58,843.42 crore in 2019-20. This meant that states got an additional headroom to borrow over and above the 3 per cent fiscal deficit ceiling stipulated in their Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) laws to the extent of the extra devolution amount in 2018-19, conditional to them amending their respective FRBM laws.

The Centre had already used a 0.5 per cent escape clause for its fiscal deficit target, after which its fiscal deficit for FY20 increased to 3.8 per cent of the GDP. States have demanded relaxation in their fiscal deficit limit. Kerala, for instance, has sought an increase in the fiscal deficit cap to 5 per cent of the GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product).

## Fitch cuts 2020 GDP forecast to 30-year low of 2%

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
MUMBAI, APRIL 3

FITCH HAS slashed India's GDP growth forecast to a 30-year low of two per cent for the year 2020 in the wake of business shut-down and lower consumer spending after the coronavirus breakout.

On the other hand, Acuite Ratings and Research has estimated that the 21-day lockdown will result in a loss of GDP of almost \$98 billion.

"Fitch now expects a global recession this year and recently cut our GDP growth forecast for India to 2 per cent for the fiscal year ending March 2021 after lowering it to 5.1 per cent previously, which would make it the slowest growth in India over the past 30 years," it said in a report on Friday.

Meanwhile, Asian Development Bank said in its outlook for financial year 2020-21 that India's economic growth is likely to slow to 4 per cent this fiscal on the back of the current global health emergency.

## Selling pressure continues: Sensex declines 674 points

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
MUMBAI, APRIL 3

STOCK MARKETS Friday continued to reel under selling pressure and closed over 2 per cent lower on worries over the impact of lockdown and rise in COVID-19 cases. The Sensex lost 674 points to close at 27,590.95 and the Nifty 50 fell 170 points to 8,083.80.

The rupee settled 53 paise lower at 76.13 against the US dollar on Friday.

**EXPLAINED**

### Stemming cases key

INVESTORS REMAIN concerned over the accelerated rise in infections across the world and the potential economic fallout.

crude supply worldwide will emerge early next week. Brent crude futures jumped 9.7 per cent, or \$2.87, at \$32.81 a barrel by 12:59 p.m. EDT (1659 GMT).

## RBI cuts forex, money market trading hours

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
MUMBAI, APRIL 3

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) has decided to shorten trading hours for foreign exchange and money markets products in the light of challenges posed by lockdown imposed to curb the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

The shortened hours, from 10 am to 2 pm, will be in place from April 7-17. "The unprecedented situation created by the COVID-19 outbreak has necessitated lockdowns, social distancing, restrictions on move-

ment of people and non-essential activities, work from home arrangements and business continuity plans," the RBI said.

According to the RBI, the resultant dislocations have adversely impacted the functioning of financial markets. "The thinning out of activity is impacting market liquidity and increasing volatility in financial prices," the RBI said.

The new hours will be applicable to call/term money, market repo in g-secs, tri-party repo in g-secs, CP and certificates of deposit, repo in corporate bonds, foreign currency and rupee trades.

## 'Delivering over 60 lakh LPG cylinders daily'

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

LPG PRODUCTS including cylinders are being delivered to customers across the country without interruption, according to a release by the Petroleum Ministry.

"Our team is doing great work in ensuring uninterrupted LPG supplies to all households in every corner of the country. More than 60 lakh cylinders are being delivered every day," said Petroleum & Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

## SC quashes ₹650-crore I-T notice sent to NDTV in 2015

ENSECONOMICBUREAU  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

IN A relief to New Delhi Television (NDTV), the Supreme Court Friday quashed a Rs 650-crore notice sent by the Income Tax Department and said it was beyond the four-year limitation period and thus did not stand the scrutiny of law.

The I-T department, in 2015, issued a notice to the company seeking reassessment of the company's income for 2008-09, and alleged that the company was involved in money laundering by round tripping funds from its UK subsidiary.

## BRIEFLY

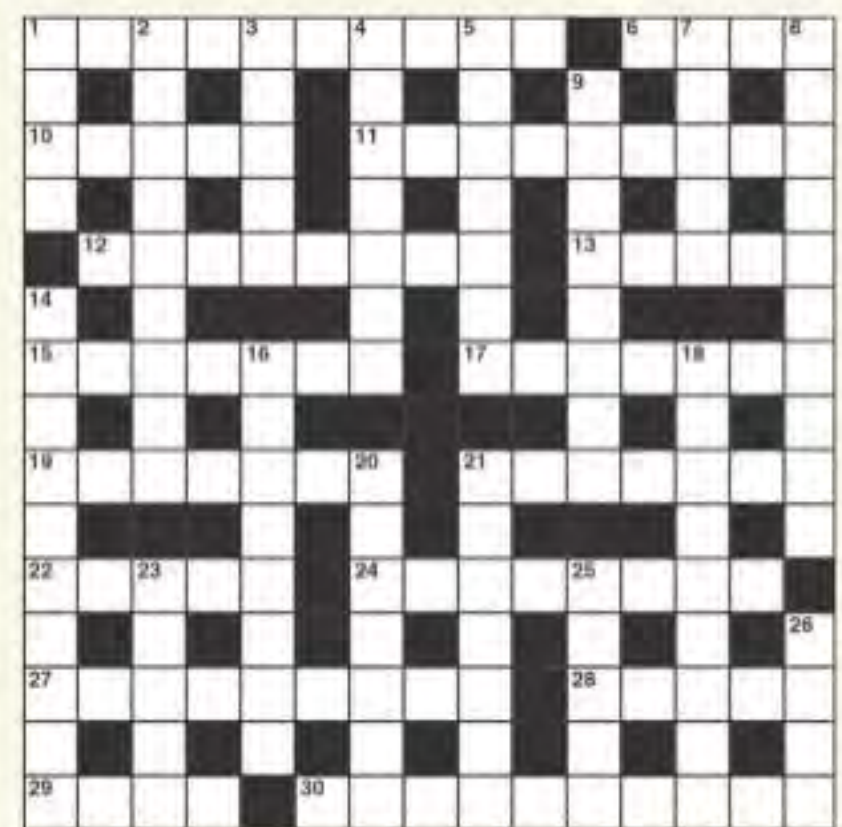
### US sheds most jobs in a decade

Washington: The US jobless rate rose to 4.4 per cent from a 50-year low of 3.5 per cent. The job loss of 7,01,000 was worst since the depths of the Great Recession in 2009. AP

### BDL contributes to PM-CARES

New Delhi: Bharat Dynamics has contributed Rs 9.2 crore to PM-CARES Fund. The aid has been raised via contribution of one-day salary by the staff and CSR funds. ENS

## CROSSWORD 4083



- ACROSS**
- 1 IST (10)
  - 6 Some letters put together show promise (4)
  - 10 Take off from the landing field (5)
  - 11 Proposes someone from Minnesota (9)
  - 12 The strength of the current? (8)
  - 13 The thanks one gets in a letter from Greece (5)
  - 15 May be consumed for the middle of the meal on board (7)
  - 17 Poet with no saving graces? (7)
  - 19 Mean to cut a vegetable? (7)
  - 21 Dad, after commercial, seen in study expressionless (7)
  - 22 With spirit, a sailor comes back to dance (5)
  - 24 Press one improperly for an answer (8)
  - 27 Tell people you've had enough, then keep quiet (3,2,4)
  - 28 All the players express mild disapproval before taking it back (5)
- DOWN**
- 1 Argument in cabinet (4)
  - 2 Peter Frost enters within the boundary (9)
  - 3 Shelter for the brave (5)
  - 4 Badly leaking connection (7)
  - 5 Smirks that could be made to impress (7)
  - 7 Extravagant when out and about (5)
  - 8 Hopeless couple taken in by bad design (10)
  - 9 A song about a subject one can't stand (8)
  - 14 Opening words? (3,7)
  - 16 Stop in front of a humble building (8)
  - 18 He may take an interest in banking (9)
  - 20 Act according to type (7)
  - 21 Drop of French perfume (7)
  - 23 A month to live, perhaps (5)
  - 25 A sign that your car's not working? (2,3)
  - 26 Offers to take the lot? (4)

Solutions Crossword 4082: Across: 1 Buckram, 5 Pagan, 8 Flood tide, 9 Tug, 10 To-do, 12 Meantime, 14 Wisdom, 15 Knight, 17 Executor, 18 Snap, 21 Zip, 22 Incurious, 24 Siren, 25 Rumbled. Down: 1 Befit, 2 Coo, 3 Rode, 4 Maiden, 5 Preening, 6 Getting on, 7 Neglect, 11 Distemper, 13 Solution, 14 Wheezes, 16 Concur, 19 Posed, 20 Drum, 23 Owl.

## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



## CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



## JUMBLED WORDS

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

Take everything you like seriously, except — Rudyard Kipling (10)

LYEER      BEFMLU

SLOGS      CNOOVY

**SUDOKU 4169**

Difficulty Level 4s  
Instructions  
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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

**SOLUTION SUDOKU 4168**

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

## DAY TODAY BY PETER VIDAL

**ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)**  
There's no point in making choices unless you do something about them. Decisions concerning home or family affairs must be translated instantly into action. Otherwise you will probably forget, or just lose interest. Unexpected news may prompt a change of course.

**LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)**  
The way forward is not always as clear as you'd like. Although it may sound slightly impractical, your best course of action may be to go for whichever option seems to be the most adventurous. Keep a weather-eye on delicate legal issues though, as you don't want disagreements at this stage.

**TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)**  
The heat has definitely been on lately, and only the most obstinate and stubborn Taurians have turned down certain dramatic blandishments. The best planetary influences relate to money, but your judgment will have to be nothing less than perfect. Now, there's a tall order.

**SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)**  
Of all the signs of the zodiac, yours is about to come closer to discovering the truth than any other. My best advice now is to stay cool and not be easily offended or dismayed. A last-minute financial rush may be good for you. Just for once, an instant decision might be the best.

**GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)**  
You are going to enjoy yourself more and more with every day that passes. But first there are certain hurdles to overcome, and these are probably more to do with self-knowledge than with actual events. In other words, if you know what you need, then you'll get what you want.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)**  
You've done well. Nobody can deny that. Having stuck to your guns and made others realise just how tough you can be, you must now sit back and listen to them. Now is the worst time to imagine you can wind anybody up, or otherwise belittle their interests.

**CANCER (June 22 - July 23)**  
There's no reason to push yourself too hard for no purpose. Time is on your side, mainly because you're only a part of the way through an enlightened ten-year cycle. Therefore, when other people have done their worst and given their best, you will still have more to offer.

**LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)**  
As the weeks go by, you will come to realise that a good friend was perhaps not all they seemed. Hidden depths should be the order of the day, so you may sit back and let your imagination be your guide. If you do a favour for someone, I am sure it will be repaid ten-fold.

**AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)**  
The past few months seem to have coincided with better personal relationships. Other people have been giving you fewer problems, and you seem to have become more confident. Today you may find time to relax and enjoy the fruits of your many emotional labours.

**VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)**  
There are extraordinarily powerful pressures to change, even when you don't want to. While aggravation at home may be a very powerful factor, those of you who have been experiencing professional pressures could suddenly realise that you can't go on as before.

**PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)**  
There are so many demands on your energy, that it scarcely seems possible that you'll have any space to rest or put your feet up, or otherwise wallow in your time off. For once, Pisces, you seem to have a purpose of your own. People who think you're their unpaid servant will have to back away.





"Life is most important at this point of time. IPL can surely wait. We all need to follow the government guidelines... When life gets better, we can think about the IPL. So many people are dying at the moment, we need to save lives."

SURESH RAINA

## SPORT PLAYS THE WAITING GAME

# Running out of road

Marathoners clock far more miles per week in training than other athletes but the lockdown has brought them to a dead stop

NIHAL KOSHIE  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

FROM RUNNING 180 to 200 kilometres a week to near zilch. A set of athletes has literally been stopped in their tracks by lockdowns imposed to contain the coronavirus pandemic. A full marathon covers almost 42.2 kilometres and for those putting their bodies on the line, standing still is not an option.

Marathoners' workouts comprise developing endurance, hill training, tempo running — every single session planned to begin four to five months before a race. But marathons around the world have been cancelled. For an athlete whose weekly schedule involves clocking kilometres at a stretch for five days a week, not being allowed outdoors can result in the wheels falling off faster than for most others.

Paris, Tokyo, Vienna, Rotterdam, Manchester, Barcelona, Boston and London are cities that have postponed marathons, shredding carefully-chalked-out training plans.

Eliud Kipchoge, often called the greatest marathon runner, shared his 'training-from-home diary' with the BBC recently. He talks about the loneliness of not being able to run with his team because of social distancing. "This is now the third day since we broke up from the camp due to coronavirus. It's really hard to train because I value teamwork. It's mutual interest because it helps me so much," Kipchoge says.

The Kenyan was training to run the London Marathon but is now confined to his home. He is based in Eldoret since his training camp at Kaptagat was shut because of the pandemic giving him the option of running solo. Kipchoge is one of the luckier ones.

India's marathon runners, confined to their rooms at training centres or at home, are learning to innovate. Sudha Singh, a qualifier for last year's World Championships, says she looks at the running track longingly from her hostel room window at the National Institute of Sports in Patiala during the ongoing lockdown.

"The track is so close yet so far," she says. "You feel like going out and running but of course I am being responsible and following all precautions," Sudha says.

Improvisation has kept her restlessness in check. She uses the staircase inside the hostel building to run up and down as a form of cardio exercise. "Only when nobody is around do I use the steps. One needs to at least do some basic exercises. In my room, I do basic strength training using an exercise band," she says.

A marathoner has multiple issues to worry about as cutting down on 'mileage' can have repercussions — the endurance level begins to dip and weight gain is a concern. "I have lost 30 per cent of my endurance in 10 days," Nitendra Singh Rawat says from Baijnath, a village located in the Garur Valley of Uttarakhand.

Rawat, a 2016 South Asian Games gold medalist, goes for short runs in this picturesque locale but he too needs to be careful. "I do a quick run into the jungle where there is a path. There is nobody in these parts so there is no fear of being infected by coronavirus but there are wild animals. Running is so important and if one is not able to, it gets really tough and depressing. I understand the importance of the lockdown," Rawat adds.

The experienced marathoner worries about putting on weight because he is not burning enough calories. High-carb drinks and water keep a marathoner going during training days and Rawat says when one stops running suddenly, there can be a build-up of fat.

"I have put on over two kilograms. I am cutting down on my calorie intake, especially carbohydrates. I have just one scoop of rice instead of two, one roti and sabzi. At the moment, I can't follow the specialised diet which I would have if I was training properly. I don't lose weight as fast as I put on so it is a challenge. My muscles are losing strength," Rawat says.

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NITENDRA SINGH RAWAT  
2016 SOUTH ASIAN GAMES WINNER

Baijnath faces in terms of supplies balances it out. "I am forced to cut down because the truck that delivers essentials to this area comes from 140 kilometres away. So we have to stock up and go easy," Rawat adds.

The 33-year-old knows the road ahead will be tough for endurance athletes with uncertainty over the duration of the lockdown, not just in India but in marathon venues around the world. "Everything has gone for a toss. Mentally also, it is very difficult because the training schedule is disrupted. And how do you plan training because you don't know when the next marathon will be held," Rawat says.

**5000 calories to 3000 per day**

National long-distance coach Surinder Singh gives pep talks to trainees over the phone to keep their spirits high. He is also monitoring their diet. "For long-distance runners being in a room and not able to run makes a huge difference. They can burn off half a kilo increase in weight fast once they return to full training. If it's more than that, it will take longer. I am trying to ensure that their diet is reduced. Say from 5000 calories a day to 3000 calories a day," Surinder says.

The advantage of being an elite athlete, according to Surinder, is that they can regain endurance levels faster than others.

Thonakal Gopi, a former Asian marathon title-holder, is at the Sports Authority of India's centre at Kangeri, Bangalore. He isn't too stressed about this 'off period' because he is recovering from a niggle in his knee. "This is like a recovery period for me. So in a way, I have not lost much in terms of training because of the lockdown as I was not 100 per cent fit yet. But I should be fine in a few days," Gopi says.

If he was in his peak training schedule, he would have done at least 180 to 190 kilometres a week. Gopi is lucky because he does not put on weight. "I am not somebody who eats a lot so it is easy for me to control my diet. My weight has more or less been constant over the years. We don't have access to the gymnasium. Everyone is training individually in their rooms. When we train for the marathons we do so in groups, but we don't know when that would be possible," Gopi says.

Around the world, the uncertainty over events makes planning tougher for athletes. Hugh Jones, a winner of the London, Stockholm and Oslo marathons in the 1980s, and a race director at events around the world, is sensitive to their predicament.

"For most elite athletes, denied any possibility of competing for the next few months, the objective should be to set training at a lower level which does no more than maintain a good level of aerobic fitness. When races start to be staged again — not just planned and scheduled — then there will be an intervening time in which runners must bring their training to a peak," Jones said in an email.

"At the moment, races are being postponed from scheduled May dates but, as the virus continues to spread, it is likely that June, July and August dates will also be postponed or cancelled. No one can tell for sure when the race programme will resume so athletes are faced with targets that move in an unpredictable way."

His wife was suffering from post-natal depression, his father-in-law suffered a near-fatal accident. All that added to the fear of his children not recognising him when he got home. He aborted the 2006 tour after the warm-up game in Baroda. Trescothick was in the spring of his career, arguably the best English batsman of his time. But then he cracked, not by pressure on the field, but something external. "At that point, I was a shell. You could have taken all my kit, all my money, taken my life away. I didn't care."

He writes that he used to get similar vibes back in his younger days too, when he had to stay away from home. He used to worry about

minutes before boarding a flight to Dubai for a pre-season camp. "I ordered a bacon and egg sandwich and as I finished the last bite, time stopped for a millisecond. In that blink of the mind, I was cooked and I knew it. Sensing I could go at any second, I was desperate to get up from the table and get away from the other two lads because I never liked breaking down in front of other people. I managed to get as far as Dixons. Oh, God."

It was enough for him to realise that it's the end of his England career. "But when the



When in the peak period of their training cycles, marathon runners typically clock 180 to 200 kilometres a week. File

## In power sports, athletes deal with weighty issues

MIHIR VASAVDA  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

For athletes, who seldom work from home, the last 10 days or so have been unique.

On the edge of a pond at his village in the outskirts of Bhiwani, Sachin Siwach is furiously pounding a punching bag. The boxer records a 23-second video, one of many made through the session, and sends it to chief national coach CA Kutappa, who monitors the session from his home in Coorg.

Over at the National Institute of Sport in Patiala, weightlifting coach Vijay Sharma lives in a hostel room that is just a couple of blocks away from former world champion Mirabai Chanu's. Strict social distancing rules mean training at the weightlifting hall is out of question. So, Sharma has been supervising Mirabai's practice via video calls. It's a far cry from the strenuous sessions they generally have: instead of the 150kg Mirabai casually lifts, these days it's just one barbell to do some modified lifting in her room.

After the Tokyo Olympics were postponed by a year due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, all Indian athletes have been ordered to halt training and stay indoors to observe the 21-day nationwide lockdown. But in time in which runners must bring their training to a peak, Jones said in an email.

In normal circumstances, they would have been at the peak of their fitness and training during this period. Instead, all of them find themselves locked down in their hostel rooms or homes, waiting for normalcy to return.

Earlier this week, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) held tele-conferences with multi-



Boxer Sachin Siwach training in his village on the outskirts of Bhiwani.

ple stakeholders — from government-backed federations to private organisations that support athletes — to take stock of the training patterns of all Indian athletes who have qualified for the Tokyo Games and those likely to make the cut.

It emerged that there has been a sharp reduction in the training levels of athletes, in most cases down to less than 50 per cent of their actual potential. The trend, though, has hardly surprised anyone since suddenly, from training seven-eight hours a day, the athletes are down to hardly a couple of hours of work and that too, just physical fitness.

But they are faced with unique hurdles, especially in power-based sports like wrestling, boxing and weightlifting. In these events, athletes are classified by their body weight so any change in that could have dramatic implica-

**The boxers, who are all at their homes, have been asked to disclose their weight twice a week, Kutappa says. Coaches at Chhatrasal Stadium have noted down the weight of each grappler before they left the training facility.**

tions, including making them prone to injury. At the same time, gaining weight is also a big possibility as even though the training level has fallen drastically, the number of meals remains the same.

"The number one thing during this period for me would be the food intake," Delhi-based physiotherapist Shrikant Iyengar, who has worked with some of India's top athletes, says. "At the national camps, things are managed pretty well in terms of the diet. But if you're coming back to your home, you know how families could be in terms of feeding their children. Then, there are some athletes who come from a background where to get proper food two or three times itself could be a problem."

So, a nutritionist has been assigned to monitor the diet of each athlete. "For Mirabai, we have completely stopped additional protein she normally consumes. No carbs either. Right now, she is on a very basic diet," Sharma says.

The boxers, who are all at their homes, have been asked to disclose their weight twice a week, Kutappa says. Coaches at Chhatrasal Stadium, where several top wrestlers including Olympic-bound Ravi Dahiya and Deepak

Punia train, have noted down the weight of each grappler before they left the training facility. But maintaining weight is just one aspect. There has never been a period when athletes haven't trained at all.

According to Sharma, Iyengar as well as former India hockey captain Viren Rasquinha, now the CEO of Olympic Gold Quest, it could take an athlete up to three or four weeks to recover from one week of training lost.

"But they need to remember that every athlete in the world is going through the same phase so in that sense, it's a level playing field," Iyengar says. "In weightlifting," Sharma adds, "another challenge is to ensure the lifter does not lose muscle mass. So we have given Mira a barbell, and she does some basic lifting in her room so the muscles don't become loose."

If maintaining muscle mass is an issue for lifters, muscle memory is a problem for boxers and wrestlers, for whom sparring is the most critical element in training. To ensure the boxers' punching range isn't affected, Kutappa and his team of nine other coaches have started to remotely monitor training of the 15 elite male boxers — five who have already qualified for the Olympics and another 10 who are in contention.

The boxers are encouraged to visualise match scenarios and land their punches accordingly while practicing alone. They record their training sessions and send it to the coaches. "So today (Friday), we told them to practise long-range punches. Next week, it will be mid-range and so on. We tell them what could be the possible match situations and the rest could be their imagination," Kutappa says. "We don't know how long this will last. So, we have to find solutions and ensure the athletes stay in shape."

## Battle with the mind

"I didn't have a clue what was going on, except there was something drastically wrong. I thought I was going to die. And having to deal with that was a nightmare."

MARCUS TRESCOTHICK,  
COMING BACK TO ME

SANDIPG

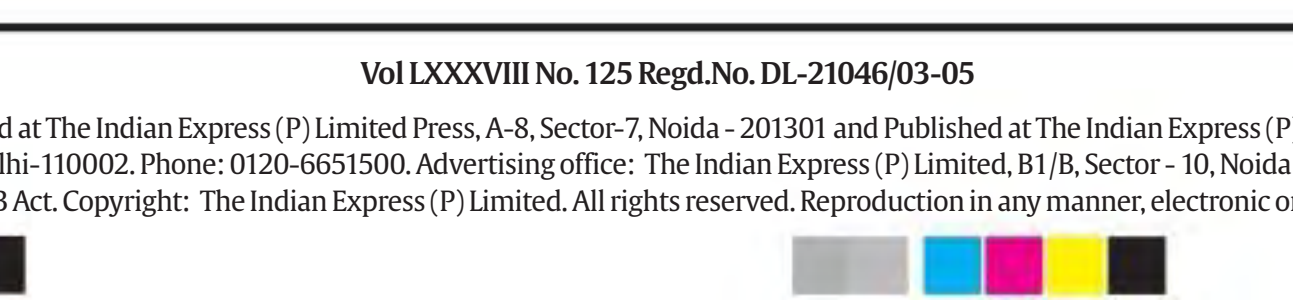
FORMER ENGLAND opener Marcus Trescothick was the first cricketer to address depression openly, at a time when such threads were considered an admission of vulnerability, a weakness rather than an illness. He poignantly describes the struggles in his taboo-breaking memoir, so much so that, as the book hurtles to the last few pages, Trescothick the cricketer becomes a fringe figure. There's a heart-wrenching account of when the "dark feelings" began asphyxiating him, when he finally felt the severity of the condition he was grappling with.

He recalls his four-star imprisonment in

a hotel in Baroda at the start of the India tour in 2006. Images kept flickering through his brain: "What was happening at home? Was Hayley [his wife] OK? Was Ellie [his daughter] all right? Oh God, what if something happened to Ellie and she needed my help and I wasn't there... Oh God, I should be there. What the hell am I doing here? What the hell is happening? When will it stop? Will it stop at all? Am I actually, here and now, in this room, going mad?"

His wife was suffering from post-natal depression, his father-in-law suffered a near-fatal accident. All that added to the fear of his children not recognising him when he got home. He aborted the 2006 tour after the warm-up game in Baroda. Trescothick was in the spring of his career, arguably the best English batsman of his time. But then he cracked, not by pressure on the field, but something external. "At that point, I was a shell. You could have taken all my kit, all my money, taken my life away. I didn't care."

He writes that he used to get similar vibes back in his younger days too, when he had to stay away from home. He used to worry about



Marcus Trescothick was one of the finest England batsmen of his generation.

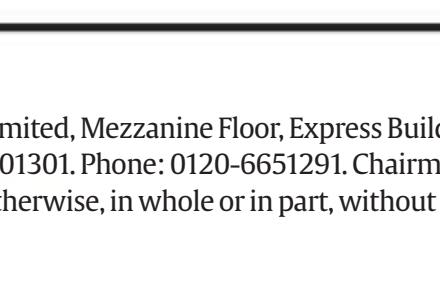
"mum and dad and my home and my sister and my cats and my stuff". But then, he waged a fight to not show it. "People try and hide depression all the time. I hid it for weeks, months and a couple of years before saying I don't want to run from this anymore."

Back in the day, it was considered unmanly. He points out that "anxiety problems are seen as a weakness. People tell you to pull yourself together. But it is an illness, it's not something you make up."

He tried different ways to cope with it,

even listening to Eminem. It did help him. He recounts: "I got into this zone where my mind was so focused on the song that everything else seemed to happen in slow motion. The bowler would let go of the ball, and I felt as if I could see every part of the seam, so I knew which way it was going to swing. It felt so simple. It was like being in The Matrix, where he's dodging the bullets."

He recovered, enjoyed a productive phase, before the "dark-winged fury" relapsed. He dusts up an incident at the Heathrow Airport,



## ONE-PARA REVIEW

COMING BACK TO ME  
MARCUS TRESCOTHICK

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.

moment came, so did certain truths and the most hurtful one was this: I could never again contemplate the possibility of playing cricket for my country, the love of my professional life."

Thus at 31, with a credible Test record of 5,825 runs at 43.79 in 76 games, he retired from international cricket. He continued racking up runs for Somerset till he was 43, but rather than the cricketer he was or the cricketer he could have been, he would be remembered for his taboo-breaking memoir.