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DAY 11: Cases doubling every 4.1 days, would have been 7.4 but for Tabligh congregation, says Ministry

As cases cross 3500, a pattern emerges: 80% in 62 districts

Aggressive containment action likely in hotspots after Apr 14

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

WHILE THERE has been a sharp spike in the number of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and deaths over the past week, over 80% of the total positive cases have been traced to 62 districts across the country.

Top government sources said restrictions are likely to continue in these districts even after the nationwide 21-day lockdown ends on April 14.

Across the country, 274 districts have reported COVID-19 cases so far.

With 505 fresh cases being confirmed in the last 24 hours, the total number of cases is now 3,577, while the death toll has gone up to 83; on March 30, the tally was 1,251 cases and 32 deaths.

According to Health Ministry estimates, the current rate of doubling of COVID-19 cases is 4.1 days, but it would have been 7.4 days if the Tablighi Jamaat congregation had not happened in Delhi last month.

"There is a clear geographical skew in the spread; 62 districts are currently reporting over 80% cases and these will be the focus of an aggressive containment strategy in the Bhilwara model. We are also stepping up testing. In the last two days, the number of tests was doubled; we will again double in the next few days," said a source.

According to what is unofficially being referred to in the government as the "Bhilwara model", the containment zones, or areas reporting large number of cases, in these 62 districts will be sealed off. The strategy was found to be effective in Bhilwara (Rajasthan), which had emerged as a hotspot last month.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

9 PM, UNITED

At an apartment complex in Ghaziabad's Raj Nagar Extension on Sunday. People across India responded to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to light candles and *diyas* to "challenge the darkness of the coronavirus" outbreak. *Praveen Khanna*

8 Malaysians who were at Tabligh meet detained at Delhi airport

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

EIGHT MALAYSIAN nationals, who were part of the Tablighi Jamaat gathering in Nizamuddin in New Delhi last month, were intercepted and detained by immigration authorities at Delhi's IGI airport while trying to board a special flight to Kuala Lumpur on Sunday.

COVID-19 cases in India have spiked ever since members of the Tablighi Jamaat who attended the gathering tested positive. Over 33 per cent of positive cases across the country have been traced to the Delhi congregation.

The eight Malaysians were intercepted by immigration authorities following a Delhi Police request to open a Look Out Circular against an estimated 200 people. The eight have since been detained by the Delhi Police Crime Branch.

Sources in the Crime Branch told *The Indian Express* that the detained persons are in the age group 25-28.

"One of them came to India in January, and another in February. The remaining six came in the first week of March.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Managing COVID: A task well-begun

It isn't possible for India to replicate what developed countries have done, writes ex-RBI Governor as he flags key issues: more testing, the 'bipolar' economic policy and the banking challenge

URJIT R. PATEL
SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS

THE POLICY roll-out over the past couple of weeks has, for the most part, been sensible. There has been some commentary that the fiscal-financial programme isn't bold enough. Perhaps so under certain assumptions, but we have to be mindful that this is not only a constrained exercise in policy making at the current juncture, we also have to brace for likely multiple impacts over an uncertain timeline that could last a year.

The welfare support — encompassing both food and money — by the government to help the most vulnerable, as also to partially defray the cost of retaining workers in smaller enterprises, for the next few months has combined compassion and prudence. And further spending has not been ruled out. Having said this, we do need to expend more resources on preventing Covid's spread because massive prevalence testing *now* could, but not guaranteed to, help avoid another national lockdown or reduce the need for multiple localised lockdowns later. So, the optimal policy timing needs to take this externality into account without delay. For the size of our population, the quantum of tests we have conducted so far seems to be too few. The government should bear the entire cost for testing, for without the requisite data we will be flying blind when making the difficult calls in the weeks ahead. The benefits are obvious, viz., credible data will infuse confidence in both the health and economic spheres, and lack of credibility will breed uncertainty, slowing down economic recovery.

Hardly any emerging market economy (EME), with the possible exception of China, can match, what developed countries like the US, UK and Germany, for instance, have announced. These countries have basically set out, at least in the short run, to offset, through generous direct government entitlements to large sections of the population and extraordinary central bank activism, the adverse demand shock following the primary negative supply shock of the pandemic. Countries that can issue reserve currencies have much more elbow room. EMEs, like India, obviously don't have this luxury. For India to replicate what developed countries have done is not possible as willy-nilly we have to confront the reality of limited financial space.

> "India's equity performance during March in dollar terms is in the bottom half in a sample of EMEs. Our macroeconomic management should not be the driver to spook investors beyond the normative portfolio rebalancing taking place globally in recent weeks."

India's correctly measured national fiscal deficit is perpetually high, and it is about to get larger

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Govt estimates: In next 2 months, need 27 mn N95s, 50000 ventilators

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

ESTIMATING A spike in demand for personal protective equipment and diagnostic kits in the fight against COVID-19, the central government has calculated that the country will require about 27 million N95 masks, 15 million PPEs, 1.6 million diagnostic kits, and 50,000 ventilators in next two months, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

According to sources, this was conveyed to industry representatives during a meeting on April 3 of the empowered group of officials on "coordinating with private sector, NGOs and international organisations", which is headed by the NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant.

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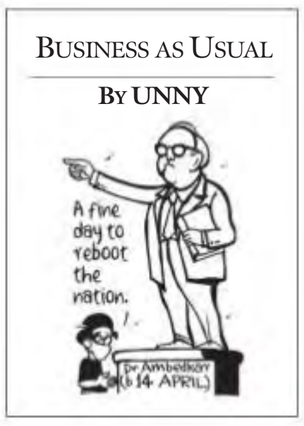
BUSINESS AS USUAL
BY UNNY



After Trump-Modi call, India 'considers' release of 'game changer' drug

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

HOURS AFTER US President Donald Trump said he has requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to release the amount of hydroxychloroquine ordered by the United States, New Delhi is "considering the request", *The Indian Express* has learnt.

On Saturday, before the phone call between Modi and Trump, India had banned all exports of hydroxychloroquine, the malaria drug that the US President has repeatedly touted as a "game changer" in the fight against COVID-19.

Sources said the issue is likely to figure during the next Group of Ministers (GoM) meeting to tackle the coronavirus outbreak. The GoM, headed by Rajnath Singh, is likely to meet next week, possibly as early as Tuesday.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

CORONA COUNT

3577	83
CASES	DEATHS

274 RECOVERED

89,534 samples have been tested as on April 5, 2020

WORLD

IN PAK, OVER 300 TABLIGHIS POSITIVE; TRUMP WARNS OF A LOT OF DEATHS
PAGE 11

Day after testing positive, MP health official is back at work — from her room

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, APRIL 5

JUST A day after she tested positive for the coronavirus, Madhya Pradesh's Principal Secretary (Health) Pallavi Jain Govil, who is playing a key role in the state's fight against COVID-19, was back at work — from the room where she has been quarantined.

In a short video message on Sunday, Govil started with the day's health bulletin — 193 cases, with 13 deaths. Then, she said: "You must have read in newspapers that I have tested positive. Because we were continually working with many officers, it's possible that I may have got the infection from someone. But I don't have any symptoms. I am

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Principal Secretary (Health) Pallavi Jain Govil in the video

In midst of lockdown, 200 gather to celebrate BJP MLA's birthday

VIVEK DESHPANDE
NAGPUR, APRIL 5

THROWING SOCIAL distancing caution to the winds, about 200 people gathered at the residence of Arvi BJP MLA Dadarao Keche in Wardha on Sunday.

Though Keche denied that he had invited people to celebrate his birthday, Sub-Divisional Officer Harish Dharmik has issued a notice to the local police, asking for action to be taken against Keche under provisions of the Disaster Management Act, the Epidemic Act, and other CrPC and IPC sections.

Keche told *The Indian Express*, "I had only invited 21 labourers who lost their livelihoods due to coronavirus, and distributed food grains to them. After that, around 11 am, I left to visit my

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SDO has asked police to take action against MLA. *Express*

Tracking phone locations, Delhi Police lodge 176 FIRs for breaking quarantine

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

AFTER THE Delhi government shared more than 25,000 phone numbers of people under home quarantine with the Delhi Police, 176 FIRs have been registered against people whose phone location suggested they had stepped out of their residence.

According to senior police officers, SHOs across the capital's 15 police districts have been handed the phone numbers that fall in their jurisdiction, and are scanning movement of people using mobile towers. Fourteen districts have compiled the data so far.

"Some officers, after tracking the phone, are also conducting surprise visits. In one such case in North West Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar, they found a man who was supposed to be in home quarantine taking an evening walk. An FIR was registered against him. In South Campus, police found a man on a morning walk, and booked him under IPC sections 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life), 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and

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5 militants, 3 soldiers die in Kashmir gunbattle

ADIL AKHZER
SRINAGAR, APRIL 5

IN THE first major operation against infiltrators near the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir this year, five militants and at least three soldiers were killed in a gunfight in Kupwara district.

Two other soldiers were injured in the operation that was launched after the Army intercepted a group of infiltrators in Keran sector last week. J&K Police claimed that the five militants were from the Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Defence sources told *The Indian Express* that Army personnel deployed on the LoC intercepted a group of militants in the Jamgund forest on April 1 following which a brief exchange of fire took place. Later, a massive search was launched in the area, with all exit points sealed and additional forces deployed.

"Fresh contact with the militants was established on Saturday and in the ensuing operation, which is still underway, five infiltrators have been killed so far," said a senior Army officer.

Defence spokesperson Col Rajesh Kalia said: "Alert troops braving inclement weather and hostile terrain have so far eliminated five terrorists attempting to infiltrate across the LoC, taking advantage of bad weather."

Kalia said two soldiers later

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

No work, cash running out, workers want out of Alang

AVINASH NAIR
ALANG (BHAVNAGAR), APRIL 5

TEST REPORTS FROM THE FIELD
TRACKING THE VIRUS, LOCKDOWN

"IF ALANG was Delhi, I would have fled home," says Rajendra Chauhan, hammering nails into planks of wood stained with oil and grease.

The 49-year-old, a worker at the ship breaking yard at Alang in Gujarat, is using wood salvaged from old ships to make a cot that he can lie on, when his shanty, with its stone walls and tin roof, gets unbearably hot during the day. Anyway, there's little work these days and most afternoons are spent thinking of home in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh.

At Alang, one of the biggest ship-breaking yards in the world, migrant workers from across the country work to turn hundreds of ships, big and small, into scrap every year. Chauhan says he uses gas cutters to slice through the bodies of large ships, a work he has been doing for the last 15 years.

But the panic over coronavirus and the ensuing 21-day lockdown to check the spread of COVID-19 has brought all shipbreaking activities in Alang to a halt and left around 25,000 migrant workers, who stay along the 10-km coast in Bhavnagar district, stranded.

Giant skeletons of ships now line the greasy shore, the jaws of cranes suspended over them. Each of the half-broken ships lie within plots leased out to ship-breaking firms, separated from the road outside by large iron gates.

At the shipbreaking yard in Alang in Gujarat, workers, mainly from UP and Bihar, complain that they have not been paid for March, and their money is running out. *Javed Raja*

These days, the workers at Alang mostly sit outside their shanties that face the sea, talking of how the "sudden" lockdown brought their lives to a standstill.

"Suddenly, the trains and buses stopped and we couldn't leave. Walking from Alang is not an option. We can easily die on the way due to exhaustion," says Suresh Singh, also from Gorakhpur. Alang is 50 km from the nearest city, Bhavnagar.

While some workers say they are yet to get their March salaries, others who have say they the ship breakers haven't guaranteed work or their salaries for April.

Hari Ram, who is from Bihar and has been working at Alang for 15 years, pulls out a small wad of Rs 50 and Rs 10 notes from his pocket. "I had a debt of over Rs 4,000 which I repaid and now this is all that's left of my March salary. I have only half a kg of rice left, some of which I ate this morning. I live alone near a Shiva temple and I now am completely dependent on Him to see me through this phase," he says.

"What if this lockdown is extended? At least allow us to leave this place and return to our homes," he adds.

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WEB EXCLUSIVE

NEVER SAW YAMUNA SO CLEAN BEFORE': IMAGES OF THE RIVER GO VIRAL

Recent pictures from New Delhi of the Yamuna river, which has been plagued by pollution for years, show that the water quality is improving.

VIDEO OF THE DAY

BEST VIRUS OUTBREAK MOVIES

Here are the best movies on outbreaks to watch during lockdown

CORONAVIRUS

ARE ONLY OLD PEOPLE AT RISK?

New book on coronavirus busts myths

EXPRESS AUDIO

Understanding India's migrants

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

On the Sandip Roy Show podcast, author Chinmay Tumbe talks about migrant workers and why they are often not considered during policymaking

FROM PAGE ONE

BSY: Can't remove blockade of NH to Kerala for safety of Mangaluru people

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, APRIL 5

THE DECISION to block the highway between Karnataka and Kerala, running through Mangaluru and Kasaragod, cannot be reversed since it would jeopardise lives of people in Mangaluru, Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa has stated in a letter to former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has raised the issue with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, stating that many people in north Kerala's Kasaragod district, which is closer to Mangaluru, have died for want of medical attention since the border is closed.

Deve Gowda, chief of JD(S), had written to Yediyurappa on March 31 to allow people from Kasaragod and nearby places to use hospitals in Mangaluru.

In a letter dated April 4, Yediyurappa stated, "If I had not taken this decision, it would have destroyed the peace of people of my state. It would have amounted to inviting death. Keeping the welfare of people of Karnataka in mind, it is the view of my government that the road blockade cannot be removed. The decision to close the highway between Karnataka and Kerala was not a unilateral decision. It was taken after serious consideration..."

Centre: Help firms get workers to supply essentials

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

THE CENTRE on Sunday asked state governments to help companies that supply essential items and are facing difficulty in getting workers due to the ongoing nationwide lockdown.

In a letter to Chief Secretaries of all States/UTs, Consumer Affairs Secretary Pawan Kumar Agarwal stated that several companies have reported difficulties in getting labour. "Local administration may be advised to facilitate in ensuring availability of labour in factories, warehouses, and transportation and distribution operations of essential food and groceries by appealing to house owners, societies and villagers to allow workers to work," he wrote.

He reiterated the Centre's stand that food and grocery means all items usually consumed on a day-to-day basis.

Denied ICU, MP woman tests positive after death

Bhopal: Two days after a 55-year-old woman died after spending 45 minutes in an ambulance, as she was refused admission in a government COVID-19 facility in Ujjain, she has tested positive. On Friday, relatives of the patient pleaded with the staff to open the gate to the ICU at R D Gardi Medical College, Ujjain, while the ambulance waited outside.

Later, the college administration claimed she could not have been admitted because it was a facility meant only for confirmed patients, and her test reports were still awaited. Dr H P Sonaniya, nodal officer for the isolation ward, said the woman's test report was received on Sunday and she had tested positive. "It's difficult to say whether she could have survived had she been admitted because she had suffered respiratory failure. She was a patient with serious co-morbidity."

MILIND GHATWAI

8 Malaysians

All came on tourist visas, only to attend the religious gathering at the Alami Markaz Banglewali Masjid, headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat outfit in Nizamuddin West," sources said.

The police, sources said, are trying to ascertain where had the eight Malaysians been all these days.

Sources said a Malindo Air special flight from Delhi to Kuala Lumpur via Mumbai was scheduled at 12.30 pm Sunday. Six hours before departure, details of all passengers were shared with the immigration department.

"While scanning the list of passengers, immigration officials found that LOCs had been issued against eight passengers. They intercepted seven when they showed up around 9.30 am. The eighth was detained later and all were handed over to the CISF which, in turn, informed Delhi Police. A team of Crime Branch, which is probing the case against the management committee of Markaz, detained all of them," sources said.

Sources in the Ministry of Home Affairs said the eight Malaysians were trying to leave on a special flight arranged by the Malaysian government.

"The Delhi Police have taken their custody. Ministry circular on this matter is clear that action against such foreigners who have violated visa rules and government directives on containment of COVID-19 must be taken under the Foreigners Act and Disaster Management Act," an official of the MHA said.

Sources said the eight Malaysians were trying to take advantage of a special relaxation that the government made early this week for evacuation of stranded foreign nationals. On April 2, the MHA released guidelines for evacuation of foreigners after it received requests from multiple governments that they be allowed to take their nationals home.

According to MHA, the requests would have to come through Ministry of External Affairs. Once endorsed by MEA, foreigners would be evacuated through chartered flights "arranged by the foreign government concerned in consultation with the Ministry of Civil Aviation". It said prior to departure, the foreign nationals would be screened for COVID-19 symptoms as per the standard health protocol.

"Only those foreign national(s) would be allowed to leave, who are asymptomatic for COVID-19. In case of symptomatic person(s), the future course of treatment would be followed, as per the standard health protocol," it said. For their transit from their place of stay to the airport, transportation would be arranged by the local embassy/consulates, the MHA said, adding that the transit pass for movement of the vehicle would be issued by the state where the foreigner is staying.

Managing COVID

even *without* an increase in outlays. First, revenues will decline sharply; and, secondly, state governments who are the first responders of the health emergency will be hard pressed. This is why despite the steep cut in policy rates the G-sec yield has been sticky, and even possibly moving up. The stress is already apparent. A payments moratorium on power suppliers by government-owned electricity distributors, if media reports are correct, is a sub-sovereign default. Some of those who have argued for up front bigger packages, stimulus, asset buyback, impromptu liquidity windows, automatic monetisation etc. have, *inter alia*, used stability as the rationale. But if the fiscal and monetary responses are overdone, the likelihood of non-trivial consequences for macroeconomic stability increases. It is a fine line between aggressively proactive and being perceived as reckless. As it is, there is a flight to safety, essentially investment in US government bonds, with home country bias also coming into play when global risks flare up. The exorbitant privilege of the US dollar not only endures, it is reinforced during crisis.

Foreign portfolio investment in Indian equity and bonds is about US$ 300 billion. US$ 15 billion exited last month, and that is not a surprise. India's equity performance during March in dollar terms is in the bottom half in a sample of EMEs. Our macroeconomic management should not be the driver to spook investors beyond the normative portfolio rebalancing taking place globally in recent weeks.

Last week, our breathless pursuit for being part of global bond indices gathered pace. Over the past year, we have incessantly relaxed prudential norms related to external flows management, opening up yet more the possibilities of surges and sudden stops of "hot" foreign capital with well-known attendant consequences. It is an expedient policy in the hope that it will lower borrowing costs for the central government; this may only help in the short run, and in the current environment even that is not apparent. Going down this policy route is puzzling at a fundamental level. While we erect trade barriers to imports through higher custom duties, we are opening the capital account for "bond tourists" further (even as hurdles are raised on outward remittances for households). How does one square this circle since it is well founded that high import barriers ultimately undermine national competitiveness and it is mostly export earnings that will have to service external liabilities? The strategy, leave aside the vision, behind this *bi-polar* economic policy is not apparent.

It is also noticeable that investor confidence has affected our banking sector more than the broader equity market; the latter declined by 23 percent in dollar terms last month, but financials declined by about 35 percent. We need to be vigilant. While non-performing assets (NPAs) will spike in virtually all economies in the coming months, initial conditions could come into play; India's NPA ratio is over 9 percent, among the highest for important economies, and it was projected to rise anyway. Questions about the sector in India persist despite comfortable capital adequacy ratios for most banks (and certainly the large ones). Recent developments pertaining to a private bank notwithstanding, the forbearances pre-Covid together with widely reported delays in resolution and the *ad-hoc* dilutions in regulations have not helped; neither has poor disclosure — late last year ten banks disclosed that for the *previous* financial year their NPAs were Rupees 26,500 crores higher than previously reported. All this contributed to an increase in the sector's risk premium.

Safety first suggests that instead of distributing dividends, banks may want to retain almost all profits to enhance the capital buffer and signal the resolve to remain strong in the face of the unfolding loss in economic activity. Perhaps, in December the decision can be revisited based on their results till then.

At some point, international investors will begin to sharply distinguish between countries along the principal measure of how successfully the health challenge is being met, which will determine how quickly and durably individual economies will get back on their feet. This could induce another financial "wave" that we need to prepare for by maintaining relative macroeconomic stability. The temporal uncertainty around the persistence of the virus is the most important reason for keeping some policy gun powder dry, even as we meet the challenge on all fronts.

(The author is a former Governor, Reserve Bank of India)

Aggressive containment action likely in hotspots after Apr 14

Meanwhile, following reports and studies hinting at the possibility of the virus being airborne, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said there was no credible evidence in this regard. "If this was an airborne infection, and not a droplet infection, every person in a family would be infected; the same would apply for other patients in a hospital. But we have not seen any evidence of that happening so far. There have been one million cases the world over, and no such instance has been found. I think we should trust that evidence," said Dr R R Gangakhedkar, head of epidemiology and infectious diseases, ICMR.

Amid criticism that India is not doing enough tests, the number of daily tests has almost doubled in the last two days, from 5,800 on April 2 to 10,034 on April 4. With 9,369 samples being tested on Sunday, a total of 89,534 samples have been tested so far.

On Saturday, the ICMR issued an advisory for the use of rapid antibody tests in some areas. The results of these tests have to be conveyed immediately to the ICMR.

In a letter to Health Secretary Preeti Sudan, Dr Balram Bhargava, Secretary, Health Research, wrote: "Overall testing for COVID-19 using real-time RT PCR is increasing and we will be approaching full capacity in near future. At the same time, we are expecting delivery of rapid test kits (blood based) for use in response to COVID-19 situation. In this regard, National Task Force deliberated with experts for ascertaining use of these rapid test kits."

At the daily briefing on Sunday, Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Health Ministry, said Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, in a video conference with district magistrates across the country, emphasised the level of preparedness "to the level of being over-prepared".

Gauba directed all district magistrates to ensure smooth operation of pharma units for manufacture of medicines and medical equipment. All districts have been advised to draw up a COVID-19 crisis management plan. The district magistrates of all the 274 districts where COVID-19 cases have been reported were requested to ensure uniformity in the crisis management plan.

India is also pressing into service CBNAAT (cartridge based nucleic acid amplification test) machines for COVID-19 tests. Agarwal said the personal protective equipment (PPE) situation has improved after some "initial shortages" as they were being imported. "However, now domestic manufacturers have started production and we are procuring more of them. We have sent all the initial stocks to the states on the basis of the case load but have asked states and DMs to rationalise their use," he said. He added that social distancing and lockdown are the biggest "social vaccine" against COVID-19.

Agarwal said 14,522 self help groups in 399 districts of 24 states have started producing masks. "The idea is that instead of the virus chasing us, we should chase the virus," he said.

The Health Ministry has issued guidelines for quarantine facilities and handling waste generated during treatment or quarantine of COVID-19 patients.

Wanted soon: 27mn masks, 50k ventilators

"Demand for 27 million N95 masks, 1.6 million testing kits and 15 million PPEs by June 2020 is estimated and actions are being taken to procure them," sources quoted an official as saying during the meeting that was also attended by FICCI representatives.

"The demand of ventilators has been estimated to be 50,000 by June 2020. Out of these, 16,000 are already available and orders has been placed for 34,000 ventilators. To facilitate procurement of ventilators and other PPEs from abroad, MEA (Ministry of External Affairs) has been taken on board," the official said.

Sources said the official's comments came in response to industry representatives who wanted clarity on "the projected demand and supply environment of PPEs" and other protective gear for the next 6-12 months. The information, they said, is critical for the industry to plan and make investments.

The empowered group is one of the 11 tasked with different aspects of coordinating the response to the coronavirus pandemic. Apart from Kant, it has 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 industry representatives at the meeting included: FICCI president Dr Sangita Reddy; Uday Shankar, Senior Vice President, FICCI; Mehta, Vice President, FICCI, Ashwani Channan, Honey Well; and Harsh Mahajan, Mahajan Imaging.

The government is battling to ramp up supply of critical medical equipment, and has restricted or prohibited their export in last few weeks. The latest move was a restriction on export of testing kits Saturday.

On March 24, the government had prohibited the export of "all ventilators including any artificial respiratory apparatus or oxygen therapy apparatus or any other breathing appliance/device and sanitisers". Similarly, the export of surgical masks, textile raw material for masks, and coveralls, was banned with effect from March 19. It had banned the export of PPEs and masks on January 31, a day after Kerala reported the country's first case of coronavirus.

MLA's birthday

guru Bhikaram Baba at Ashta. But my political adversaries took advantage of the situation and spread the word that I was distributing foodgrains, leading to several people thronging my residence. When I got to know that so many people had assembled, I rushed back and dispersed the crowd with the help of police."

Wardha Superintendent of Police Basavraj Teli, however, confirmed that Keche was present at home when the crowd gathered. "We have registered an offence in this regard against Dadarao Keche," he told The Indian Express.

Keche added, "I understand that we all must strictly adhere to social distancing norms, as desired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to fight coronavirus. But my opponents seized this opportunity to tarnish my image." He, however, didn't name any of his "opponents".

Wardha Collector Vivek Bhimanwar said, "We had not given him any permission for the programme nor had he sought permission from us. He had expressed his desire to organise a blood donation camp to mark his birthday, but we refused him permission. Instead, we told him, five persons can donate blood at the Arvi Primary Health Centre while adhering to social distancing norms. As soon as police got information about the crowd at his residence, they dispersed them. The SDO has directed police to conduct an inquiry."

Trump request

Sources said this can be viewed as an opportunity for India's pharmaceutical industry to gain access to US markets, but a call will be taken by New Delhi only after taking into account its own "domestic requirements". The assessment will be carried out by the ministries of health and pharmaceuticals.

Hydroxychloroquine tablets are recognised as a prophylactic for those on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19 — doctors, nurses, paramedics and first responders — and can be used to treat patients.

Exports of the drug and its formulations are prohibited "without any exceptions" and with immediate effect, India's Directorate General of Foreign Trade said in a order posted on its website Saturday. The trade regulator had last month restricted overseas shipments of the drug, allowing only limited exceptions on humanitarian grounds and for meeting prior commitments.

"I called Prime Minister Modi of India this morning. They make large amounts of Hydroxychloroquine. India is giving it a serious consideration," Trump told reporters at the White House Saturday.

With more than 3 lakh confirmed cases of coronavirus and over 8,000 fatalities, the US has emerged as the worst sufferers of the outbreak. And based on some initial results, the Trump administration is banking heavily on hydroxychloroquine.

Following provisional approval from the US Food and Drug Administration, the malaria drug along with a combination of other drugs is being used in the treatment of about 1,500 COVID-19 patients in New York. Trump told reporters that the drug is yielding positive results — and said that if successful, it would be a gift from heaven.

Delhi Police

188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant)," an officer said.

Data compiled until April 5 shows that the maximum number of FIRs so far have been registered in Dwarka (35), followed by Outer Delhi (34), South West (31), South East (27), Central (13), South (12) and North West (12). The rest of the districts saw relatively fewer FIRs.

Announcing the decision last week, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said: "We have decided that by taking assistance of police, we will track the phones of people who were ordered to be home quarantined." These include people who have a travel history as well as those who have been advised home quarantine by hospitals.

Taking inspiration from Singapore and South Korea, which have used the tech route to check quarantine violations, the decision to track movement of 25,429 people was taken in a meeting called by Lt Governor Anil Baijal with Kejriwal, Chief Secretary Vijay Kumar Dev, and Police Commissioner S N Shrivastava. In its statement, the Lt Governor's Secretariat had said that "technology should be used for contact tracing and checking compliance of home quarantine cases".

Sources told *The Indian Express* that staff have been dedicated for this purpose at all police stations, and DCPs are closely monitoring the developments. "If police find a violation, they either question the person over the phone or pay a surprise visit before filing an FIR," a source said.

Alang workers

Standing near him, Birendra Gupta, who is from Uttar Pradesh and works with one of the 75 ship breakers at Alang, says the firm is yet to pay his March salary of Rs 15,000.

"Today also, 80-90 of us went to collect our salaries but didn't get it," says Gupta, adding that he has Rs 40-50 left from his February salary.

"When this gets exhausted, we will perhaps die of hunger. No government official comes here to check our condition. Who will we talk to or complain to?" he asks.

Captain Arun Mishra, port officer at Alang and a representative of the Gujarat Maritime Board, the state government arm that manages the shipbreaking activities at Alang, says 97 per cent of ship breakers have paid salaries for March. "There is no shortage of food at Alang and the needs of the workers are being taken care of by the plot owners," he insists.

Haresh Parmar, a shipbreaker at Alang and honorary joint secretary of the Ship Recycling Industries Association, too, says salaries of "most workers have been paid for the month of March". "For the last few days, we have been taking special permission from the district authorities to travel from Bhavnagar to Alang to distribute salaries," he says.

At his small kirana shop facing the sea, Kamal Jani says there is "no shortage of supplies" but has been dealing with another trouble: workers asking for debt. "About 100 workers come regularly to buy essentials. But now, a lot of them ask if they can pay later. I know them well so I can't even say no," says Jani.

The message of personal hygiene and the need to wear homemade masks has reached these parts, but workers say the government could have reached out to them better.

"The government has been claiming that they are cleaning and sanitising every corner. Look at the condition here," says Dilip Singh, a worker from Chhatral in Jharkhand, pointing to a lane lined with shanties, where he shares a 10x10 ft space with another co-worker. "All of us bathe in this lane and defecate in the ground behind. If even one of us gets infected, we are all doomed," he adds.

Kashmir

succumbed to injuries. "Despite prevailing inclement weather conditions, casualties have been evacuated... Total three soldiers martyred. Operation in progress," he said.

J-K Police said in a tweet that "5 of Lashkar[Lashkar-e-Taiba] who infiltrated from Keran sector" were killed in the last 24 hours.

Kupwara SP Shriram Ambarker said: "(Area of) 3-4 km was put under cordon since the group was intercepted... forces are presently involved in the ongoing operation."

An Army officer said: "The area, where the operation is going on, is rough terrain and covered in several feet of snow. This is the reason the operation is taking days."

This is the second biggest operation in the Valley in the last 24 hours. On Saturday, joint forces killed four militants affiliated to the Hizbul Mujahideen in South Kashmir's Kulgam district.

MP official

healthy and on doctor's advice working from my room."

In the message, she went on to describe how she felt no discomfort at all. "...for most people, corona is a mild infection without any symptoms. It's better to be at home. Maybe, we are infected. In the absence of symptoms, we are unaware and, therefore, unknowingly spread it," she said.

Govil's resolve earned praise from Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan after she took part in a video-conference he held with senior bureaucrats and officials Sunday.

"It's with assistance from officials like you that we will soon get rid of the infection from the state," he said, adding that he had advised her rest but she chose to work.

Earlier, two senior officials who are part of the state's task force against the disease — an IAS officer tasked with drugs, equipment and logistics, and an additional director (health) — had tested positive.

epaper.indianexpress.com

'If we stop work out of fear, how will people get water?'

900 million gallons supplied per day, 1,000 tankers on the roads that reach every corner, and a group of dedicated men ensure that the capital doesn't go thirsty

KEEPING DELHI RUNNING

WATER

FOR THEM, LOCKDOWN MEANS COMING TO WORK

SHIVAM PATEL
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

EVERY DAY, Dinesh Kumar Sharma, 47, drives his water tanker to a pumping station at Yamuna Vihar, from where around 50 tankers like his fan out across east Delhi, supplying a priceless essential commodity: drinking water.

Sharma has been a water tanker driver for the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) for the last 20 years, but these days, as he sits at the wheel of his truck — its 5,000-litre tanker filled to capacity, the dripping water from the tap at the rear leaving a wet patch of black on the tarmac as usual — he knows something has changed. For one, the roads, deserted as a result of the 21-day lockdown to check the spread of coronavirus, seem wider and there are fewer interruptions, except for the police barricades.

The nine water and nine main sewage treatment plants of the DJB, the agency that's responsible for supplying potable water to the capital, have been working 24x7 to ensure that it supplies over 900 million gallons per day (MGD) of water and recycles around 500 MGD of waste water daily. Workers involved in the operation of plants and at the DJB's quality control laboratories have all been reporting to work every day, as are the water tanker drivers who supply to around 550 unauthorised colonies and JJ cluster areas that have no supply lines. While projects such as construction work and laying of water and sewage pipelines have been temporarily discontinued, those from the ministerial divisions and administrative divisions have been largely asked to work from home.

Sharma says he worked even during the recent riots in Delhi -- Yamuna Vihar was among the localities that were hit during the communal clashes over the Citizenship Amendment Act in February.

"Everyone knows us in the areas we work. I have even given my phone number to people, telling them they can call me directly if they have problems and can't get through to the helpline or the officials," says Sharma.

Every day, Sharma, who lives in Ghaziabad with his two sons, would take a bus to Yamuna Vihar and reach the pumping station, where his tanker would be parked. Once his turn comes, he positions his truck below one of the large faucets at the station while a person inside the control room switches on the motor to fill water in the tanker.

Sharma usually makes at least three to four rounds a day between the pumping station at Yamuna Vihar and the colonies he supplies to, mostly night shelters and slum clusters in areas such as Shiv Vihar, Gokalpuri and Maujpur.

Residents of Vivekananda camp, Chanakyapuri, fill water from a tanker. *Tashi Tobgyal*

But these are unusual times.

"With all this coronavirus, my family and neighbours keep telling me to stay at home… but how can I do that? If we stop going to work out of fear, how will people get water?," he says.

So these days, he drives with a mask on and wears gloves too. "The department gave us these masks and gloves. They also gave us a demo on how to wear these and how we must wash hands frequently, maintain a distance from each other, not touch our faces, etc. I wear the mask all the time, but these rubber gloves make my hands sweat a lot, so I wear them only while driving. Anyway, I use a sanitiser when I get home because my house is on the third floor and I take the support of the railings as I climb up," he says.

While Sharma says he understands the importance of these measures, he adds: "Initially, when we went to the colonies to distribute water, we had a hard time getting people to maintain some distance between themselves and not crowd around like they usually do. Now they all know that they should stand apart, we don't need to tell them anymore."

Sanjay Sharma, a chief water analyst at the DJB, says the department is trying to make arrangements for employees to stay in some of the empty DJB staff quarters.

"That will save them the hassle of finding transport to work and back. Even if we use the buses allotted for essential services, we tend to touch handles and seats and we don't know who and what's infected," says Sharma.

Hemlata Rao, 48, who works as an assistant chemist at the DJB's Okhla sewage treatment plant laboratory, commutes to Delhi from Gurgaon's Sector 37C every day.

She has been carpooling to the office from Sikandarpur in Gurgaon, where her husband drops her off and picks her up. "Since I have a DJB identity card, police do not ask a lot of questions, but my husband has to answer them when he's driving back... But the work we do here, of quality control, is crucial. We do sample collection, testing and have to ensure the quality standards are followed stringently. The plant won't function without that. Which means, no water," says Rao.

CORONA WATCH

Fire service gets hoax call

New Delhi: New Delhi: Fire department went into tizzy after it received a call regarding a fire in the ninth floor at Loknayak Bhawan, minutes after 9 pm Sunday when the PM had urged citizens to light candles and diyas outside their houses. Fire tenders were rushed to douse the fire but they found only candles on the floor. The call was declared a hoax.

Surprise raids to check overcharging

New Delhi: The Delhi government conducted 10 surprise inspections in different parts of the capital to check overcharging of essential commodities during the lockdown and took action against six retailers and manufacturers. Officials who conducted a raid at SN Market, Lahori Gate said retailers were found stocking packaged items without MRP, along with other violations. Six prosecution actions, total amounting to more than Rs 1 lakh, were initiated against defaulting retailers/manufacturing companies. Packaged Commodity Rules prescribe requirement of printing of mandatory declarations on the packaged commodities, including the name and address of the manufacturer, net quantity and MRP.

Students in Noida not to be charged fee for April

Noida: The Gautam Budh Nagar DM, Sunday, issued an order directing all educational institutions to not demand fees for current month. Officials said defaulters could invite financial punishment or prison upto two years. **ENS**

Erected to honour capital's first L-G, plaque along the Yamuna now serves as bed for many

ANAND MOHAN J
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

RATAN SINGH'S home does not show up on Google maps. One has to walk along the Yamuna riverbed near Kashmere Gate, duck under a pipeline, and scramble past a pack of dogs to reach a hole in the ground. This is where the 25-year-old used to sleep — until burgeoning crowds of homeless people and stranded labourers took his spot.

He is thankful to the first Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, Dr A N Jha, for his new sleeping spot — the commemoration stone erected in his honour near the riverbed now serves as a bed for him and several others.

Around 11.30 pm on Saturday, Singh used a bag packed with his clothes as a pillow and covered himself with a red blanket torn in several places. "*L-G sahab amar rahe*," he said, as he slipped into sleep.

For the past one week, several hundred men, most of them working as caterers in weddings, sleep out in the open on the Yamuna riverbed. With social distancing norms allowing only around 15 people to sleep inside shelter homes nearby, the riverbed is their only refuge.

With social distancing norms allowing only 15 people to sleep inside shelter homes nearby, the riverbed is the only refuge for the homeless. *Tashi Tobgyal*

Some sleep next to buffaloes and dogs, covering themselves with plastic sheets torn in several places. They are the lucky ones. Those without a blanket have a curtain of mosquitoes hovering over them, waking up every few minutes to wave their hands in the air as they slowly drift off to sleep again. Only the sound of someone coughing breaks the silence.

The white circles and squares marking the waiting lines to the seven shelter homes dotting the stretch now has homeless men sprawled over them. Several men, huddled against each other, even share a blanket as they sleep under trees.

The only ones following social distancing are the ones sleeping on cement slabs every few metres, even though they dismiss the dangers posed by coronavirus as a minor blip in their lives.

"*Roti, kapda, makaan. Yahi samasya hai. Virus wagera kuch nahi hota*," said Raj Kumar Thapa, who left Nepal for work in Delhi over two years ago.

Even though food supply has been steady as scores of volunteers feed them through the day, there is little protection against the virus. "What is stopping the government from making a small house for me? I also work. I have worked in factories, pulled rickshaws most of my life, and washed plates at weddings. *Ek ghar humein bimmari se bachayega*," said Pappu Kumar Yadav, who wandered across the riverbed looking for a place to sleep.

Sunil Kumar Aledia, who has been working with homeless people for over two decades, said, "There are several hundred men who sleep out in the open on the Yamuna riverbed stretch near Kashmere Gate. People have been sleeping here even before the shelter homes were made. There are no medical checkups in this area, and the homeless are vulnerable to the vagaries of nature. Now, with the virus doing the rounds, there is overcrowding here."

Shiv Kumar (35), who worked as a palanquin bearer for Rs 500 for eight hours of work, now sleeps beside an elderly man who raves about corruption killing the homeless. "He has a mental disorder... But I don't feel scared, he is harmless," said Kumar.

Volunteers said around 6,000 face masks were distributed to people along the riverbed. But no one here is using one. Their masks are tucked inside their pockets, and they have not seen a bar of soap in two weeks.

Ram Singh (32), a wedding caterer, who was playing cards with three other men, said: "*Yahan chai mil rahi hai, wahi bahut badi baat hai. Saabun toh dur ki baat hai.*"

Naushad (34), who used to work at a local hotel cutting vegetables for Rs 300 a day, is among the lucky ones who was allowed to sleep on a cot inside the hotel's kitchen. A yellow shawl, a face mask hanging around his neck and a dhoti is all he has. "*Hotel mein kum se kum bed milta hai*," he said.

19 FROM NIZAMUDDIN

58 cases, 1 more death in capital

ASTHA SAXENA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

A 52-YEAR-OLD man from Haryana's Sonepat is the seventh person in Delhi to die from COVID-19. He had been admitted to Maharaja Agrasen Hospital in Punjabi Bagh and died on April 4.

On Sunday, 58 new cases were reported in the city, pushing the total number of confirmed cases to 503.

Of the new cases, 19 are connected to Nizammudin Markaz and 25 are under investigation. Meanwhile, three more people — including the mohalla clinic doctor from Maujpur who had tested positive — have recovered. A total of 18 people have been discharged so far.

Dr Deepak Singhla, medical director, Maharaja Agrasen Hospital, said: "The patient was admitted to the ICU on March 13 with several critical illnesses; he did not show any symptoms of COVID-19. His samples were sent for testing after another patient admitted in the ICU ward, who had left the hospital, tested positive. We had sent samples of all nine patients admitted in the ICU and only one of them (the deceased) tested positive for the disease."

Five healthcare workers at the hospital — three nursing orderlies, a doctor and a housing staff — have also tested positive.

The first patient, a resident of Haryana's Rohtak, was admitted to the ICU unit between March 10 and March 30. He then left the hospital against medical advice. His report came out positive on March 30 and, immediately, 81 of the hospital's staff were quarantined.

"This is a preventive measure which every hospital takes if a patient from the hospital tests positive for the disease. Staff were immediately quarantined. Since the index patient was admitted to the ICU, we had to send samples of the other ICU patients for testing as well… We are now tracing the contact history and a list of 60-70 healthcare workers has been prepared so far," added Dr Singhla.

In Delhi, at least 23 healthcare workers, including doctors, nurses and other staff members, have tested positive for the disease.

At the Delhi State Cancer Institute (DSCI), eight healthcare workers have tested positive after a resident doctor from the department of preventive oncology contracted the virus.

"Two doctors and six nurses have tested positive from our institute. We have sent samples of over 50 healthcare workers for testing and their reports are awaited," said Dr B L Sherwal, medical director of DSCI.

CORONA COUNT DELHI NCR

616 CASES | 7 DEATHS

47 RECOVERED

OF THE CORONAVIRUS CASES IN DELHI

61 Have history of foreign travel history

51 Through contact tracing

320 From Markaz masjid

477 Admitted at hospital

- Discharged: 18
- Deaths: 7
- Under investigation: 71

TOTAL CASES: 503

24x7 CONTROL ROOM NUMBERS: 22391014, 2301028, 22302441,22307133, 22304568, 22307745,22307135,22307145,22300012,22300036

In South Delhi slum with two cases, strict checking on roads, fear in homes

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

WITH ROADS blocked and the area sealed, residents at a JJ camp in Moti Bagh are a tense lot. On Saturday, a resident of the camp tested positive for coronavirus, following which the area was cordoned off and police were deployed.

Residents at the JJ camp mainly work as fruit and vegetable sellers, but with markets shut and movement restricted, the lack of income is another issue. The patient, aged 50, is a contractual sanitation worker at the AIIMS Trauma Centre. His wife, who works as a sanitation worker at Charak Palika Hospital, has also tested positive. Both have been shifted to RML Hospital, officials said. Their children have been shifted to the quarantine facility at Chhatarpur.

Rajender Sharma, a resident of the camp, said, "After we saw the ambulance take him, we hid in our house. My wife knows the family and often speaks to them. I told my wife to stay in a different room; I am scared that my family will get infected. Police are only allowing a handful of people to go outside to buy groceries and medicines. I don't have a lot of money, and I won't go out. It's better to stay here and be safe."

At the Moti Bagh slum cluster, Sunday. *Renuka Puri*

Some residents complained that they should have been informed about the incident sooner. On Sunday, people peeped through their windows as police and other volunteers patrolled the streets and shouted at residents who stepped out.

District police have barricaded roads outside the camp and deployed a team to patrol the area and check for violations. Inside the camp, the pradhan and a group of residents have parked trucks and auto-rickshaws outside lanes to block movement of residents.

The pradhan, Suraj Singh, said, "We won't let anyone leave the area. There are more than 20 families who live near the patient's house. During lunchtime, we get food with the help of policemen or we go to the Sarvodaya school."

The camp, also called Sabzi Mandi Colony, has over 3,000 houses, including several makeshift tents.

Asha, a fruit seller who lives there, said, "The man was under home quarantine for the last five-six days. When I came to know about the test results, I was a bit scared because his wife buys fruits from me. I don't have any symptoms and hopefully, I am fine. Their neighbours are shocked and not speaking to anyone. Since the area has two big markets, people fear that the virus may have spread. Police have shut all shops and are not letting anyone come here and buy fruits from my stall."

DCP (southwest) Devender Arya said, "We have sealed the area completely and police personnel have been deployed outside to patrol the streets. We are helping residents with food and trying to restrict their movement. We don't want them to go out and violate rules."

Flip-flop on Section 144 in Gautam Budh Nagar

Noida: With Noida reporting the highest number of coronavirus cases in UP, the district administration has imposed CrPC section 144 in Gautam Budh Nagar, prohibiting gathering of more than four people in a public space, till April 14. The administration initially issued an order stating Section 144 will be till April 30 but revised it within hours.

"Keeping in mind the present situation in the district and in an effort to contain its spread, section 144 is being imposed in the district till April 14. No political, religious, social, sports, cultural gatherings will be allowed to take place. Rallies, processions are also prohibited till the given time frame. Legal action will be taken in case of non- compliance," said Suhas L Y, DM Gautam Budh Nagar.

Sources said the administration's initial order was not in line with CM's directives which stated that the lockdown will be lifted as per schedule. Till Sunday evening, 58 positive cases were reported in Gautam Budh Nagar. **ENS**

At National Highway- 24 , going towards Ghaziabad on Sunday evening. *Prem Nath Pandey*

AFTER PM'S APPEAL

For 9 minutes, Delhi switches off

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

ACROSS DELHI, as the clock struck nine, living room lights were switched off with clockwork precision, bringing down the total power demand from 1,968 MW to 1,242 MW.

Several residents responded to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to light candles and lamps by also setting off firecrackers. Policemen, putting in long hours away from their families ever since the lockdown started, also did their bit by putting up *diyas* atop barricades at many places.

Power authorities and discoms worked in close coordination to ensure there was no disruption in supply due to the rapid fall and surge in demand, as living room lights went off and flickered back to life in a coordinated fashion.

"There was a reduction of 473 MW in BSES areas (total Delhi 726 MW). We coordinated the mega event with other stakeholders at both the central and state levels and successfully managed the event in our license area of 950 square km in Delhi," said a BSES spokesperson.

At night shelter number 235 near Sarai Kale Khan bus terminal, Sunday. *Amit Mehra*

In a display of "collective resolve" to fight the coronavirus pandemic, the timing had to be precise — 9 pm, nine minutes. So when the lights were turned off at the city's night shelter number 235, near the Sarai Kale Khan bus terminal, not everyone was convinced.

"*Abhi teen minute bacha hai, kya yaar* (there are still three more minutes till 9)," rang out a voice in the dark as Meher Chand, the caretaker of the shelter, switched off the lights.

Soon after, Chand lit two candles on his table, where rested the logbook carrying the 60 names housed under the corrugated tin structure.

The flames flickered with the army of mosquitoes buzzing around, undaunted by the repellent below throwing up coils of smoke. Soon after, the soft neon light being emitted by the insect killer was to become a matter of dispute.

"Should that not be switched off as well?" asked one person. "*Usko rehne do bhai, baitha nahi jaa raha hai* (let it be, in any case it's become difficult to sit here)," came the repartee.

For the next five minutes, the soft glow of the candles was to be the only source of light in the room, painted in blue, in which rows of men lay silent and motionless.

A plumber, many beldars, a former sales executive of a reputed laptop brand, a mason, son of a retired servicemen driven away for his drinking — the only common factor binding these men, each with their stories of hardship, is the absence of a roof over their heads.

The lockdown has dealt a body blow to their income — meagre, scanty wages — that ensure two meals a day, if not much. Their complaints, which they share, if at all, are in a tone that is almost apologetic.

"*Thoda sa mazdoor logon ke liye soch lete. Waise toh accha nirnay hai* (The lockdown is no doubt a good decision, but I wish they were a little more considerate of labourers," said Monazir Ansari, a beldar who hails from Bihar's Sitamarhi.

Ramprakash Bishwakarma, hailing from UP, also believes the step was the need of the hour but said "there is no money to buy even a toothpaste".

At the shelter, authorities have made arrangements for lunch and dinner. "*Par thoda roti bhi mil jaata, bas chawal hi dete hai do time* (wish they also provide chapatis. We are served only rice)," said Ansari.

Chand said new people were not being sheltered in the facility for the time being.

"Most of them have been here throughout the lockdown period. We cannot afford to allow new people to live here due to the fear of the virus. However, food is for everyone," he said.

Rajesh, a labourer who belongs to UP's Sultanpur, said his earnings have been low since the assembly elections: "Even during the elections we didn't get much work. And now the virus has broken our back."

City's private schools write to parents on *diya* campaign, MHRD says it was voluntary

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

SEVERAL PRIVATE schools in Delhi asked parents to share details of whether their children participated in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's '*Diya Jalao*' campaign, citing directions from the state government.

Following the Prime Minister's appeal, Education Secretary Amit Khare had written to all autonomous institutions stating, "As directed by Prime Minister on April 3, 2020, students may light a *diya* or torch of their mobile for 9 minutes on 9 pm on April 5 to realise the power of light and highlight the objective for which we are all fighting together. However, no one should assemble on roads, or colonies, or anywhere outside their houses."

The CBSE then forwarded Khare's letter to all its affiliated schools. Ministry officials insisted the letter was only an advisory and doesn't mandate participation.

Among the schools that sought the information were Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, Mother's International School and Delhi Public School, Rohini.

They had asked parents to fill a form asking if they have downloaded the 'Arogya Setu' application on their smartphones and if their children lit a candle or *diya* at 9 pm on March 9.

"MHRD has appealed to students and their families to download the Aarogya Setu app developed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare but there was no form developed to monitor the activity. Mr Garg's (joint secretary Maneesh Garg) email was only meant to inform students to voluntarily download the app and participate in the diya/candle lighting..."

MINISTRY ON TWITTER

The Indian Express has seen the forms circulated by the schools. The principals of the schools did not respond to calls and messages.

Arogya Setu is a COVID-19 tracking app that uses Bluetooth and location to track your interaction with someone who could have been tested positive for coronavirus.

The principal of a prominent South Delhi school said they had received directives to collect the information from Directorate of Education officials on the WhatsApp group for school principals and their administrative cluster. However, she said these directions were only to find out how many parents had downloaded the Aarogya app.

"The directorate has asked us to provide them with feedback on how many have downloaded the app by Monday morning, along with how we disseminated information on the app. These are directives from the MHRD. We have not sent out any form for the parents but have asked our Parent Teacher Association in charge to try and get an estimate. We have not been asked to submit anything on *diya* lighting. We have just been asked to let them know it is happening," she said.

On Sunday evening the Ministry tweeted from its official handle: "MHRD has appealed to students and their families to download the Aarogya Setu app developed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare but there was no form developed to monitor the activity. Mr Garg's (joint secretary Maneesh Garg) email was only meant to inform students to voluntarily download the app and participate in the diya/candle lighting. There is no coercion on anyone to do the same. Since schools are closed there is no question of monitoring the students' attendance."

The Delhi Director of Education said no instructions to submit such information was issued. "Neither have we sent such directives to schools nor have we been asked to submit such information by the Ministry," said Director of Education Binay Bhushan.

Tablighi members in colony, BJP man does 'purification'

ABHINAV RAJPUT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

DELHI BJP secretary Vikram Bidhuri Sunday carried out a "purification" drive in South Delhi's Tughlaqabad Railway Colony, close to a government quarantine facility where members of the Tablighi Jamaat have been moved. Several people were evacuated from the Nizamuddin Markaz last week, and many have since tested positive for COVID-19.

This comes days after BJP president J P Nadda urged party leaders to refrain from giving "communal colour" or creating any "division or differences" over the COVID-19 outbreak.

Bidhuri told *The Indian Express* that the sanitisation drive was held in a 1 km-radius around the colony, especially along the route the members took. "The drive was carried out for purification of *desh drohi* (anti-nationals) and *manavta virodhi* (anti-humanitarian) elements. We used 'gangajal' and sanitiser and purified the local post office, temple, dispensary and gurdwara," he said.He also made a Facebook post about it.

The drive was carried out in Tughlaqabad Railway Colony by Delhi BJP secretary Vikram Bidhuri

Vikram Bidhuri is the nephew of South Delhi BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri. He had unsuccessfully contested the 2015 and 2020 Delhi Assembly polls.

The MP said his nephew carried out the drive in his personal capacity and not on behalf of the party.

Meanwhile, BJP councillor and standing committee member of the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) Rajpal Singh demanded that the Markaz building be sealed.

The Markaz, a five-storey building with a basement and a terrace, can accommodate over 3,000 people. The building has already been sealed and the keys are with the administration.

Singh, in a letter to the Deputy Commissioner, Central Zone, South MCD, said: "I request that there should be an immediate order given to seal the building so that such incidents are not repeated... Police action should also be taken against the building."

He told *The Indian Express*, "I have been informed that there were two plots which were merged into one. Our first step is to establish the illegality. There are also reports of height violation, which have to be examined."

Standing Committee chairperson of the SDMC, Bhupendra Gupta, however, said the civic body's priority right now is to tackle coronavirus: "We will examine this issue when the outbreaks ends."

Man injured after jumping off hospital

New Delhi: A 37-year-old suspected COVID-19 patient fractured his leg after he jumped off the third floor of Lok Nayak Hospital. Doctors said the man, who was admitted at the hospital on March 31, was awaiting results of his test. The incident took place around 11.30 pm Saturday.

"The man jumped from the third floor of the hospital and fell on the tin shed near the first floor. He then hit the ground and was found by hospital authorities. Doctors said he fractured his leg but is stable now," said DCP (Central) Sanjay Bhatia.

Police said that the man lives with his parents in DDA flats at Mata Sundri Road, IP Estate. **ENS**

4 Sri Lankans positive in Nuh, had attended event at Nizamuddin

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GURGAON, APRIL 5

FOUR MORE people tested positive for COVID-19 in Haryana's Nuh district Sunday, bringing the total number of cases in the district to eight.

"The four who tested positive today hail from Sri Lanka and had attended the Tablighi Jamaat gathering at Nizamuddin last month," said a spokesperson of the district administration on Sunday.

According to a health bulletin released by the district's health department Sunday morning, a total of 128 samples have been sent for testing so far, of which 29 have tested negative and eight positive. Results of 91 samples are still awaited.

Of the four others who have tested positive, three, all hailing from Kerala, had tested positive on Friday. Officials had said they too had attended the gathering at Nizamuddin last month.

The fourth person to test positive is a truck driver from Palwal who had recently travelled to Gujarat. His sample had been collected after he began displaying "some symptoms" of the virus.

FIR claims firing near mosque

Gurgaon: Police registered an FIR Sunday after an Imam sleeping inside the masjid at Dhankot village claimed shots had been fired near the structure the previous night. The accused are yet to be identified. Police said the FIR has been registered under IPC section 285 (negligent conduct with respect to fire or combustible matter) and relevant sections of the Arms Act.

"An empty cartridge was found. We are trying to identify the accused. We are also looking at CCTV footage," said Pankaj Kumar, SHO of the Rajendra Park police station. **ENS**

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Time Extension Notice

Due to unavoidable reasons the Date of Submission & opening of **Tender No. PDD-11/2019-20-** Rewiring of residential building at Dakpathar colonies.,**Tender No. PDD-12/2019-20-** Hiring of one no. diesel driven vehicle (Mahindra Bolero Camper/Tata Xenon Crew Cabin with cabin, model 2018 or later) or equivalent for one year & 24 hours with driver., **Tender No. PDD-13/2019-20-** 'Hiring of one no. Diesel driven vehicle Non-AC (Mahindra Bolero Plus/TUV-300 or equivalent model 2018 or later) for one year with Driver and **Tender No. PDD-14/2019-20-** Repairing and overhauling of 33KV Isolators of 33KV Khara feeder # 4 & 5 is being extended as below:-
Last Date for submission of Tender : 21.04.2020 (Up to 16:00 hrs).
Date of Opening of Tender : 23.04.2020 (at 11:30 hrs).
Other Terms & Condition will remain same.
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BEST AQI IN MARCH

Industries shut, vehicles off roads but calm winds bring down city's air quality a notch

MALLICA JOSHI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

WITH INDUSTRIES, private vehicles and public transport shut during the lockdown, air in Delhi and NCR, among the worst in the country, was the least polluted in March since air quality records have been maintained.

On Sunday, however, air quality settled in the 'moderate' category at 102 - down down from a 'satisfactory' 87 on Saturday -- demonstrating the impact of weather on AQI.

The Central Pollution Control Board's AQI is based on air quality data from different monitoring stations across the city. Delhi's data on Sunday was calculated based on 30 stations.

Experts said the sudden increase was because of a dip in wind speed. "Last week, the wind speed was an average of 25 km/ hour. This is because there was an active Western Disturbance blocking the flow of wind from the northwest direction. The average wind speed on Sunday was 10-12 km/ hour. Because the input load (of pollutants is so less) the change is only marginal but meteorology is a major factor," said Kuldeep Srivastava, who heads the Regional Weather Forecasting Centre, Delhi.

An aerial view of the capital from atop the Civic Centre. *Amit Mehra*

The air quality along the Indo-Gangetic Plains is amongst the worst in the world due to a variety of factors - including meteorology. Winters see a steady accumulation of pollutants while high temperatures and wind speed in summer months means the dispersal of pollutants is quicker.

"Had this dip in wind speed been observed outside of a lockdown situation, the AQI would likely have been in the higher range of 'poor' or 'very poor'. The conditions we are observing right now are extremely unique and have never been seen in the modern world. It will help us understand the nature of Delhi's air and the extent of the impact of changes in different parameters," said a Pollution Control Board official, who did not want to be named.

According to Srivastava, the wind speed will be low on Monday as well. "The city is expected to see thundershowers on Tuesday, when the impact of the disturbance will be felt in the city," he said.

Delhi's temperature has been below normal for most of March and the first five days of April as well because of frequent Western Disturbances.

CORONA WATCH

A walk-through disinfectant tunnel in Hubbali, Karnataka. *PTI*

GUJARAT

14-month-old boy youngest case in state

Rajkot: A 14-month-old child, son of a migrant labourer couple from Uttar Pradesh, tested positive for coronavirus in Jamnagar district on Sunday, making him the first COVID-19 case in district and the youngest to be infected in Gujarat. The baby is in a critical condition and on ventilator, Jamnagar District Collector Ravi Shankar said in a video on Sunday, appealing to the people in the neighbourhood to stay indoors. The total cases in Gujarat are now 128. **ENS**

HP

Facing 'social boycott', man kills self

Shimla: A 37-year-old man killed himself in Una district on Sunday after allegedly facing "social boycott" by some villagers, who suspected him to be suffering from COVID-19 despite testing negative for it. Mohammad Dilshad committed hanged himself under a shed at his residence in Bangarh village. Una Sadar SHO Darshan Singh said Dilshad was one of the contacts of a Tablighi Jamaat member who had returned from New Delhi. **PTI**

BIHAR

Bajrang Dal worker held for rumours

Patna: A Bajrang Dal worker in Munger was arrested Sunday for spreading rumours that members of a Tarapur family had attended the Tablighi Jamaat meet in Delhi, and that one of them had tested positive for COVID-19. Authorities clarified that no member of the family was on the list of Tablighi Jamaat attendees from Bihar, and dismissed social media rumours of a person testing positive from Tarapur. Gautam Singh Kushwaha, a district-level Bajrang Dal functionary, had on Saturday posted the rumours on on Facebook. **ENS**

J&K

Hours after death, man tests negative

Jammu: Twelve hours after his death at a quarantine facility in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur town, a 100-year-old man was tested negative on Sunday. The deceased was asymptomatic. He and his brother were shifted to a quarantine facility after they came in contact with a person in Magheni village who tested positive for the coronavirus, said Udhampur Deputy Commissioner Piyush Singla. Meanwhile, Udhampur district, which had reported nine positive cases so far, saw 45 samples testing negative during the day. **ENS**

Some anxious moments, but grid holds up

ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

IN THE run-up to the 9-minute lights-off exercise, the frequency of the synchronised grid plummeted briefly below the mandated lower range of 49.9 hertz — falling to its lowest point of 49.73 hertz at 8.49 pm, and causing some anxious moments among those manning the country's electricity grid.

This slide in frequency, in part, reflected the transition orchestrated by grid manager POSOCO in India's power generation mix — hydro generation being reduced "and conserved" for providing flexibility for the 9 pm event, and major thermal stations also being ramped down progressively, in anticipation of the fall in load.

While there was never really a point during the entire episode that seriously threatened the the grid's operations, a point of concern was that frequency drifted steadily upwards over the 9-minute period, and ended at 50.3 hertz at 9.09pm — marking a frequency jerk of around 0.57 hertz over a span of a little over 20 minutes.

An official involved in the exercise said the frequency was reduced to 49.73 Hz just before 9 pm in an effort to ensure that it did not overshoot when the lights were switched off at 9 pm.

"During the 9 minute period the frequency was steadily ramped up to 50.3 Hz by 9.09 pm so that it doesn't dip low when the lights are back. That seems to have worked," the official said.

The gradual ramping up of hydro and gas-based generation post 9 pm ensured that the drop in the load and subsequent load increase over the next 9 minutes was handled by the grid operators without any significant problems. How much load reduction took place could not be ascertained and the National Load Despatch Centre data compiling the trend was awaited at the time of going to press.

GRID FREQUENCY ON APRIL 5

8.30pm	50.01Hz
8.49pm	49.73Hz
8.54pm	49.94Hz
8.59pm	50.03Hz
9.04pm	50.2Hz
9.09pm	50.27Hz
9.14pm	50.13Hz
9.19pm	50.19Hz
9.24pm	50.19Hz
9.29pm	50.11Hz
9.34pm	50.12Hz

Modi dials ex-PMs and CMs: 'He asked for cooperation'

MANOJ C G
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi Sunday reached out to his predecessors Manmohan Singh and H D Deve Gowda, former Presidents Pranab Mukherjee and Pratibha Patil, and a host of chief ministers and Opposition leaders, including Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, seeking their cooperation for the measures that his government is taking to contain the coronavirus outbreak.

"He told me that the country is facing such a serious threat and he wants the cooperation of all to overcome this problem. He said that his government is trying to the best of its ability, and that senior leaders should extend your cooperation to overcome the crisis," Gowda told *The Indian Express*.

"I had made a suggestion to him few days back to look after the agricultural workers, landless workers, construction workers...I said you are taking certain decisions, do you best you can to fight corona," Gowda said.

Modi did not indicate whether the government plans to lift the lockdown after the 21-day period, he said. The former prime minister, however, did not appear too happy with the government's response to the crisis. "The country is facing a critical situation. I don't want to mix politics. There are so many issues, which is going to crop up. The way in which they are ordering for ventilators, the kits...we need so many kits. Even America is getting from China, the situation is not being properly handled," he said.

PM Modi lights a lamp during the 9-minute exercise. *ANI*

Congress sources said Sonia Gandhi drew the Prime Minister's attention to the multiple letters that she and her son Rahul Gandhi had written to him in the recent days. The Prime Minister assured that he will look into them.

"Mrs Gandhi drew his attention to the letters that she and Rahul had written suggesting a complete architecture to deal with the COVID pandemic. She also told the Prime Minister that we will support the government in every endeavour. The suggestions are basically two-pronged — how to deal with the health emergency and the economic crisis," sources said.

Modi, meanwhile, also spoke over phone with SP veteran and former Union minister Mulayam Singh Yadav and son Akhilesh Yadav, DMK chief M K Stalin, Trinamool Congress chief and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Odisha Chief Minister and BJD leader Naveen Patnaik, Telangana Chief Minister and TRS chief K Chandrashekar Rao and SAD chief Parkash Singh Badal.

The conversation comes ahead of his scheduled meeting with leaders of political parties Wednesday through video conferencing.

Sources said Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad and Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury will attend the meeting with the Prime Minister.

Modi's call to Sonia comes at a time when the Congress is increasingly turning critical of the government's response to the outbreak — and today's reachout is perhaps the first in several years.

Modi had met Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi in November 2015 in an attempt to break the deadlock over the Goods and Services Tax Bill.

Don't need theatrics, give stimulus to economy, says Cong

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

EVEN AS Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a telephonic conversation with Congress president Sonia Gandhi and sought her party's cooperation in the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic, the opposition party on Sunday pointed out shortcomings in the government's response to the outbreak.

Senior party leader Anand Sharma said that "theatrics is not a substitute for concrete action" and demanded that India commit 5 to 6 per cent of its GDP as a stimulus to restart the economy.

Addressing the media, Congress spokesperson Sushmita Dev said lighting lamps alone will not help win the war against coronavirus and demanded answers from the government on the safety of health workers. She claimed there is a shortage of adequate protective gear, and maintained that lifting of the nationwide lockdown should not be done in an unplanned manner, as it was implemented.

Sharma focused more on the economy, arguing that "time is running out to prevent a grave and prolonged economic crisis." He said: "Bold measures and sector-specific stimulus alone can save the economy from threatened collapse. The first package was small and far too inadequate for economic revival. Fiscal deficit and inflation cannot be a consideration. These should be kept in abeyance. India should commit 5-6 per cent of its GDP for a stimulus to be meaningful and effective. Extraordinary situation calls for more than ordinary response."

Sharma pointed out that the US and major European countries have announced huge economic packages, which include cash transfers, central bank cash injections, spending pledges and loan guarantees. Arguing that revival of economic activity is now essential, as millions have lost wages and jobs, he asked the government to announce a staggered "unlocking plan for factories and businesses" and restoration of interstate movement of cargo containers.

NSO, Israeli firm that built spyware Pegasus, testing corona tracker

SEEMA CHISHTI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

THE ISRAELI technology company NSO Group, whose surveillance tool Pegasus was used last year to spy on at least 1,400 mobile phones and devices including those used by human rights activists, lawyers and journalists in India, is testing software to track the novel coronavirus pandemic sweeping through the globe.

"The use of technology in a medical context to monitor the spread of the coronavirus raises concerns about privacy. But using it properly and proportionately will not compromise privacy and can really save lives," Shalev Hulio, founder and CEO of the NSO Group, has written in an opinion piece in an Israeli online publication that has been linked on the company's website.

"All that is needed for a reliable and simple epidemiological investigation is - with the knowledge of the patient - to access cellular companies' data and understand where the patient had been in the previous 14 days," Hulio wrote in the article that first appeared online on March 23.

"It is important to appreciate that the historical information for each mobile subscription is already and routinely available to the cellular companies.

"This information only includes cellular locations for that subscription and does not require any collection of information from the device itself.

"In other words, with the exception of retrieving the historical location of the device, there is no listening in on calls and no data, personal information or messages that exist on the device can be gathered," he said.

"The decision", Hulio wrote, has been "approved by the Israeli government". It allows the (Israeli) Ministry of Health to obtain "two critical pieces of data to help stem the spread of the virus - locating the places where those patients have been and mapping the people who were in their vicinity", he said. "Through mapping the path of the patient, we can see the people around them and they can be directly alerted." After the analysis has been completed, the government will have a "fairly accurate statistic of the number of people who were in the vicinity of verified patients" - however, at this stage "without any personal information or identification".

The next step would be to "send a message to people with a high potential for infection who were in the vicinity of the patient and ask them to go into self-isolation". This, Hulio said, would allow the authorities to build a "tree of infection" - important because medical officials are currently "struggling to track source of infection for a number of patients".

Over the past few days, multiple tech websites have quoted unnamed sources and those claiming to have seen a demo of the tracking system, as saying that several governments and agencies around the world have carried out test runs of the NSO's coronavirus tracking software.

The NSO Group has not denied these reports. An email sent to the company by *The Indian Express* was not answered.

Pegasus used a security vulnerability in the world's most popular messaging app, WhatsApp, "to send malware to approximately 1,400 mobile phones and devices ('Target Devices'). for the purpose of conducting surveillance of specific WhatsApp users ('Target Users')", according to a lawsuit filed in the US last year.

WhatsApp confirmed to *The Indian Express* (October 31, 2019) that it was aware that journalists, lawyers and human rights activists in India were targeted for surveillance, and that it had contacted each of these 'targets'. The NSO Group says it sells only to governments and institutional buyers and there were calls for an inquiry into the purchase of the Pegasus spyware from the governments of Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra.

8 patients recover in Punjab hotspot, none needed ventilator

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA
NAWANSHAHR, APRIL 5

IT'S BEEN 10 days since Punjab's coronavirus hotspot Nawanshahr last saw a positive case. The district, now officially known as Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar, recorded 19 of Punjab's 69 cases, and one of its seven deaths. Eight have now recovered, and all the others are doing well. None needed ventilator care.

The district had been put under complete lockdown after the death of a gurdwara granthi who had returned from Germany and Italy. All 18 positive cases were traced to him.

The death of the 70-year-old, only the fourth linked to coronavirus in India, had taken officials by surprise. They also stared at two potential nightmares when they started contact-tracing. Nawanshahr, part of Punjab's NRI belt along with three other districts, had more than 1,600 visitors from abroad in March. Plus, the granthi, a popular figure in the region, had visited the Hola Mohalla at Anandpur Sahib, attended by two lakh pilgrims.

Eventually, the case count remained limited to 19. Their ages vary from a two-year-old grandson of the deceased to a 78-year-old priest. Dr Harwinder Singh, the Senior Medical Officer of Nawanshahr Civil Hospital, where all are admitted, said the patients were doing well.

As part of precautionary measures, more than 30,000 remain in home quarantine, while 26 teams keep a watch on the NRIs.

The deceased, who suffered from hypertension, returned from abroad on March 7 to village Pathlawa and took ill soon after. He died of a heart attack on March 18, and the test results showing him coronavirus positive came a day later. Over the next couple of days, the count of positive cases in the area rapidly rose to 18 including 14 family members of the deceased.

Isolation ward at Nawanshahr civil hospital, Punjab. *Express*

Among the nearly 500 people who were found to have direct or indirect contact with the Pathlawa granthi were at least 75 students who had travelled in a bus for their Class 12 board exams with his granddaughter. The 70-year-old had also visited hospitals in Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur, as he continued to feel ill, where relatives had come to visit him. Between March 9 and 11, the granthi with 34 others had gone to the Hola Mohalla.

But the turnaround after initial surge in cases took meticulous effort. With eight 24x7 helplines, so far around 6,600 kits of dry rations have been distributed to daily wagers in the village, and 26,000 more kits to BPL families. The Nawanshahr police have also started distributing sanitary napkins. Auxiliary nurse midwives, ASHA workers, and interns of a private nursing college have been going village to village examining people for health complaints.

Govt asks BHU V-C to explain absence from campus amid pandemic

RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

THE UNION HRD Ministry has asked the vice-chancellor (V-C) of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) to explain his absence from the campus given the gravity of the coronavirus outbreak even as the BHU hospital is designated for COVID-19 testing and treatment.

Vice-Chancellor Rakesh Bhatnagar has not been in BHU since March 14.

The ministry discovered this during a video-conference with all university heads on Saturday. A showcause notice seeking an explanation was issued to Bhatnagar the same day.

Bhatnagar told *The Indian Express*: "There were four meetings in Delhi on different dates - from March 14 to 19 - and I was attending all those meetings. (While in Delhi) I felt cold and feverish. Suspecting that I was infected (with COVID-19), I decided to stay back in Delhi and quarantine myself."

By the time he recovered, the V-C said, the lockdown was implemented and he couldn't travel to Varanasi.

"Whether I am in Banaras or Delhi it doesn't matter, as I was working from home using communication technology," he said.

During Saturday's meeting, HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal is learned to have asked how the BHU V-C is managing such a large campus from Delhi. Bhatnagar is a professor at JNU and was appointed the BHU head in April 2018.

Bhatnagar has a week to respond to the notice.

4 Kerala expats lose corona battle in 24 hrs

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 5

IN ITS devastating journey from one country to another, COVID-19 has so far claimed the lives of eight expatriates from Kerala, four of them on Sunday.

According to information reaching here, a nurse from Kottayam, who was settled in Ireland; a Malappuram youth who worked in Saudi Arabia as a driver; and a 51-year-old from Idukki, who worked with metropolitan transport authority in New York, died on Sunday.

On Sunday, the virus also claimed the life of a 21-year-old student belonging to an expatriate family in New York.

Beena George, 58, a nurse, was settled in Ireland for two decades with her family. A cancer patient, she was tested positive for COVID-19 two days ago. Her husband and daughter are under isolation, a relative in Kottayam said.

In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, P Safwan, 37, died on Sunday after being in hospital for five days. From the hospital, he had sent a voice clip to a relative in Malappuram, expressing his helplessness in fighting acute breathing troubles and fever.

On Saturday, a youth named Shabanas, a native of Kannur, had died in Saudi Arabia's Medina. He had been hospitalised with symptoms of COVID-19 on March 28.

On Sunday, Shone Abraham, 21, who belonged to a Kerala family settled in New York, died after battling the virus for four days.

A native of Idukki, E Thankachan, 51, also died in New York, where he worked with the metropolitan transport authority. Relatives at Thodupuzha in Idukki were informed on Saturday that Thankachan, settled in New York for two decades, had contracted the virus. Last week, another expatriate Thomas David, 43, who also worked with the same transport authority in New York, also died. He hailed from Kerala's Pathanamthitta district.

Another expatriate who lost the battle to the disease was Kunjamma Samuel, 85, who came from Ernakulam. She died in New Jersey last week.

In Birmingham, England, retired expatriate doctor Pachiri Hamsa, 80, died on April 1. A native of Malappuram district, Hamsa was undergoing treatment for the infection for several days.

Visits, time spent at retailers down 77%; at workplaces 47%: data

SUSHANT SINGH
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

TRACKING CHANGE following measures implemented to check COVID-19, Community Mobility Reports, prepared by Google on the basis of data used in its products, show a huge decline in visits and length of stay at retail and recreation sites, grocery stores and pharmacies, parks, public transport hubs and workplaces. These reports, on the other hand, show a marked increase in mobility trend to the place of residence.

According to the report with data as of March 29, mobility trends — visits and length of stay — for places like restaurants, cafes, shopping centres, theme parks, museums, libraries, and movie theatres have gone down by 77 per cent from the baseline. This is on anticipated lines since all recreation sites, restaurants and cafes have been shut down after the government announced a three-week lockdown, starting March 24 midnight.

The baseline for the report — to make the comparison with the latest data — is the median value for the corresponding day of the week, during the 5-week period from January 3 to February 6.

The report charts movement trends over time in India, across different categories of places such as retail and recreation, groceries and pharmacies, parks, transit stations, workplaces, and residential areas. It is useful in understanding the impact of government's measures on social distancing efforts as well as access to essential services.

Incidentally, there has been only a 47 per cent decline in visits and stay for workplaces, despite the lockdown period forcing most companies to adopt work-from-home measures for their staff. Offices involved in essential duties and factories producing essential goods, however, have been exempt from these measures during the lockdown period.

Even though the lockdown exempted these as essential services, there is a 65 per cent decline in the visits and length of stay to places like grocery markets, food warehouses, farmers markets, specialty food shops, drug stores, and pharmacies, as on March 29.

Mobility trends for places like national parks, public beaches, marinas, dog parks, plazas, and public gardens, which have all been shut during the lockdown, show a decline of only 57 per cent.

There is a 71 per cent decline in visits and stay for places like public transport hubs such as metros, bus and train stations, as per the Google report. Most public transport hubs have been closed for the lockdown, although certain public transport facilities have been kept functional for transporting staff on essential duties.

Mobility trends for places of residence have gone up by 22 per cent during the lockdown, compared to the baseline period. This is on expected lines during the lockdown period, where the whole country has been brought to a halt to check the spread of COVID-19.

According to Google, these insights have been calculated based on data from users who have opted-in to Location History for their Google account, so the data represents only a sample of our users. This, Google says, may or may not represent the exact behaviour of a wider population.

DELHI CONFIDENTIAL

MYSTERY CALLS

WITH TRACING of participants of Tablighi Jamaat's congregation in Nizamuddin going ahead in full steam, Rajya Sabha MP from Samajwadi Party Javed Ali Khan recently got caught in it inadvertently. Khan recently got several calls from the police from his native place, looking for a person with another name. Khan had to repeatedly tell the police that they were calling the wrong number. Turns out his contact, with another name, was given to the local police for tracing and quarantining as a person who could potentially have been to Nizamuddin Markaz. Khan told the police that he hasn't been to Nizamuddin in the last couple years, and has been indoors since the Janata Curfew was announcement last month. It appears his phone location may have been identified while passing the area on way from his residence in Jamia to Parliament when the House was in session. Khan, however, is not complaining, knowing what the police are looking for.

LOCKDOWN DIARIES

KNOWN FOR his unconventional working style, Drinking Water and Sanitation Secretary Param Iyer on Saturday shared his unusual experience during the lockdown. He uploaded a 24-second clip on Twitter in which his wife Indira can be seen trimming his hair. "Another Lockdown Saturday. Getting ready to go to work. Early morning experiment at home: an economist with her optimisation model, My wife, Indira, trying her hand at a haircut and not doing a bad job! Can't complain anyway," he tweeted, tagging Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani and Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. The clip has attracted thousands of views already.

ISOLATION? NOT REALLY

GOVERNMENT OFFICERS have noticed that many of their colleagues got their children studying or working in coronavirus-affected countries to return right before the nationwide lockdown was implemented. Residents of a prime government officers' colony in Delhi's Chanakyapuri had been complaining that the son of a colleague was brought back from Europe and kept at home without informing neighbours. The family reportedly went about walks and other outdoor activities inside the colony. After a few days of murmurs, the authorities got wind and put "home quarantine" symbol outside their residence. But the parents are still reportedly moving around the colony, much to the discomfort of others.

1 shot dead in UP clash over COVID-19 spread

Two held; Adityanath directs police to invoke NSA

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, APRIL 5

A 29-YEAR-OLD labourer died of bullet injury in Kareli area of Prayagraj on Sunday following a clash triggered by allegations that a particular community and the Tablighi Jamaat were behind the spread of the coronavirus in the country, police said.

Lotan Nishad was allegedly shot in the head and died on the spot at Bakshi Morha village.

Police have detained Nishad's neighbours Mohammad Sona and Naushad, who have denied opening fire. No weapon has been recovered from them so far, police said. They have alleged that the victim was shot during the clash by his elder brother Birjul, who works as a security guard.

"The victim's associates have claimed that they opened fire only after Lotan was shot dead," a police officer said.

Birjul's licensed single barrel gun has been seized and will be sent for examination, police said.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed authorities to charge the accused under the National Security Act (NSA) and announced an ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh for the family of the deceased.

An FIR has been lodged against Naushad and 14 unidentified persons at the Kareli police station, police said.

Mohammad Sona was allegedly trying to flee the spot after the firing and was allegedly thrashed by villagers, who handed him over to the police. He is undergoing treatment at the district hospital where doctors said his condition was stable.

"During preliminary investigation, it came to light that the victim today made allegations that a particular community and Tablighi Jamaat members are responsible for spreading coronavirus, during a discussion with neighbours. Members of the other community objected to the remarks following which heated arguments took place," Prayagraj Circle Officer Amit Srivastava said.

It is alleged that Nishad made the remarks while reading a newspaper near his house. Birjul reached the spot after he came to know of the confrontation.

As the situation spiralled into a clash, firing took place and Nishad was injured, police said.

"The picture will be clear only after the autopsy report," Prayagraj SSP Satyarth Aniruddha Pankaj said.

At the site of the clash in Bakshi Moda village, Prayagraj. *PTI*

Workers prepare personal protective equipment for medical staff at a workshop in Maheshtala, Kolkata. *Partha Paul*

One killed in clash over turning hostel into quarantine centre in Bengal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, APRIL 5

A 40-YEAR-OLD man was killed and another injured as two groups clashed using crude bombs and country made guns over the question of setting up a quarantine centre at Talibpur village under Panrui police station limits in Birbhum district on Saturday night. Seven people have been arrested under charges of murder and illegal possession of arms.

While one group was supporting the health department's proposal to set up a quarantine centre, the other opposed it saying that it will lead to a higher chance of infection for villagers.

Nasiruddin was hit by crude bomb in his chest and taken to Bolpur sub-divisional hospital where he was declared "brought dead", police said.

Another villager, Mehmud Sheikh (21), received bullet injuries in his leg and was admitted to the same hospital.

"We have arrested seven people. A contingent of policemen has been posted in the village," said Birbhum Police Superintendent Shyam Singh.

UTTARAKHAND DGP WARNS TABLIGHI MEMBERS

Report to authorities by April 6 or face murder bid charge if any case reported: DGP

LALMANI VERMA
DEHRADUN, APRIL 5

UTTARAKHAND POLICE have issued a warning to Tablighi Jamaat members, who have attended any congregations recently and are presently living in Uttarakhand, to report to the authorities by April 6 or face action under attempt to murder charges if any case of non-disclosure is found linked to any coronavirus infection afterwards.

There are 26 COVID-19 cases in Uttarakhand and 16 of them are linked to the Tablighi Jamaat. The cases have been reported in Dehradun, Nainital, Haridwar and Udham Singh Nagar districts.

DGP Anil K Raturi on Sunday issued an appeal to Tablighi Jamaat members who have been part of any gatherings recently to produce themselves before the police and administration by April 6. Their medical examination will be conducted and they will be put in quarantine and provided medical assistance if necessary.

"....if the police and administration after April 6 come to know that somebody was deliberately hiding himself and after that that person has spread infection in the area, action will be taken under the charge of attempt to murder, besides the Disaster Management Act and other sections of IPC. A case of murder will be lodged if someone dies in the village or locality due to that infection. Strict action will be taken," the DGP warned.

DGP Anil K Raturi

Raturi said state intelligence, administration and police officials were trying to track all Tablighi Jamaat members who had recently visited Nizamuddin and have now returned to Uttarakhand.

Police have compiled a list of 325 names of people who came to Uttarakhand from other states to participate in activities of the Tablighi Jamaat after March 1. Nine of these have left the state. Officials said that 260 of them were put in institutional quarantine till Saturday. Further, 383 people from Uttarakhand had gone outside the state as part of Tablighi jamaats after March 1 and 26 of them are yet to return while the rest are in institutional or home quarantine in the state.

MADHYA PRADESH

BJP govt to use outfit that faced closure under Cong rule to tackle COVID-19

MILIND GHATWAI
BHOPAL, APRIL 5

THE CHANGE of guard in Madhya Pradesh has turned out to be a godsend for the Jan Abhiyan Parishad (JAP), a body meant to serve as a bridge between NGOs and the state government, because the Congress government wanted to close it down arguing that its members were ideologically inclined to the RSS and BJP.

Noting that JAP's activities had stopped in the last one-and-a-half years, CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday instructed that the organisation should be actively involved in providing relief to people suffering due to COVID-19.

JAP has 416 members, who are functional at district and block levels and in touch with 27,000 rural-level organisations. In a video conference, the CM said they should assist the district administration to provide food and ration to the needy. They should also involve themselves in distribution of Ayurvedic, Homeopathic and Unani medicines that build immunity, and to provide information about the coronavirus in rural areas.

JAP functions under the Department of Planning, Economics and Statistics. On Thursday, a day before the CM's video conference, Additional Chief Secretary Mohammed Suleiman wrote to all divisional commissioners and district collectors, asking them to seek assistance from JAP members to fight the outbreak.

Attaching a list of JAP coordinators at division and district levels, Suleiman said the organisation had been formed for comprehensive development and to create an aware society.

The incumbent CM is the ex-officio chairman of the body.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Tablighi Jamaat trail continues, 85 of 86 fresh TN cases linked to Nizamuddin meet

THE NUMBER of coronavirus cases continued to rise across India with many of these linked to the Tablighi Jamaat meet in Delhi. *The Indian Express* takes a look at the states:

TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu reported 86 COVID-19 cases and two deaths on Sunday, taking the total number of cases in the state to 571. The total death toll in the state is five now. Of the fresh cases reported on Sunday, 85 were linked to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation.

UTTARAKHAND

Four persons linked to the congregation tested positive for COVID-19 in Uttarakhand Sunday. Among the new cases, three are in Dehradun and one in Nainital. The total number of COVID-19 cases in the state so far is 26.

ANDHRA & TELANGANA

Andhra Pradesh reported 62 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, all of them linked to the congregation. The total number of cases in the state climbed to 252. Officials said those who tested positive had attended the congregation or came in close contact with those who did. Telangana reported 62 new cases, taking the total number to 333.

KARNATAKA

Seven new cases of COVID-19 infection were reported in Karnataka on Sunday, five of them linked to the Tablighi Jamaat congregation. Out of the seven cases, two are an elderly couple who returned from Dubai on March 22. Among the five linked to the congregation is a 41-year-old, three women aged 36, 41 and 67, and a man aged 40. A total of 151 coronavirus cases have been reported in Karnataka so far. Four people have died and 12 discharged.

UTTAR PRADESH

The number of COVID-19 deaths in Uttar Pradesh reached three on Sunday with the death of a 55-year-old man. The number of COVID-19 cases in the state is now 276 and 50 per cent of these are linked to the congregation.

KERALA

Eight fresh cases of COVID-19 were reported from Kerala on Sunday and four of them had taken part in the congregation in Delhi. The number of COVID-19 cases in the state is now 314. Out of them, 56 have been cured and 256 are under treatment. Out of the positive cases, 10 have been linked to the congregation. On Sunday, the number of those under isolation or home quarantine came down to 1,58,617 from 1,71,355 on April 4.

GUJARAT

Sixteen more Tablighi Jamaat members who attended the gathering in Delhi were tracked down in Gujarat on Sunday, taking the total number of people who attended the congregation in the state to 126. Of these, eight have tested positive for COVID-19 till now.

Institutions are dragging their feet, it's disappointing: Mehbooba's daughter

NAVEED IQBAL
SRINAGAR, APRIL 5

ON SUNDAY, former J&K CM Mehbooba Mufti completed eight months of incarceration. Her daughter Iltija describes this period as a "twin catastrophe" since "our rights were violated and my mother was taken".

Stating that the people of Kashmir went from a "military lockdown to a health emergency", Iltija said this was an ordeal "with no end in sight".

The PDP president has been under detention since August 5 amid a crackdown on the political leadership in J&K ahead of the revocation of its special status.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Iltija said she last met her mother about a week ago. With the number of COVID-19 cases spiking, she says she doesn't want to risk infecting her mother. "I have stopped seeing her for now because every time I am visiting her, it's a risk," she said.

Iltija also expressed concern about their failure to get a date for a hearing in court. "We filed a Habeas Corpus plea two months ago and we have been trying to get a date since and our lawyers say we may or may not. Typically, a Habeas Corpus plea warrants urgent attention...All the institutions are dragging their feet and it's disappointing," she added.

Mehbooba, Iltija

Mehbooba, she said, is "fine physically but the problem with solitary is not physical as much as it is mental and emotional". "She is emotionally a strong person but I don't understand the urgency to detain her even at a time like this (COVID-19). Hardcore criminals are being released or given parole across the country, this is a former chief minister and former MP, what is she in jail for," she asked.

Statue of Unity put on OLX for corona donation, complaint filed

Vadodara: The world's tallest statue, Statue of Unity (SoU), in Kevadia Colony of Gujarat, was put up "for sale" on online marketplace OLX, prompting the authorities to take down the advertisement and file a complaint.

The statue, a towering memorial dedicated to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, was put up for sale for Rs 30,000 crore to donate the money for medical and healthcare equipment in view of coronavirus spread. The description read, "Emergency! Selling Statue of Unity because of urgent money required for hospitals and healthcare equipment."

After an article appeared in a local newspaper, the SoU authorities on Sunday approached the police to file a complaint. "An unknown person, with a mala fide intention to defame the government had put up the Statue of Unity for sale on OLX, despite not being authorised to do so," a release signed by Nilesh Dubey, Chief Administrator, Statue of Unity, stated. **ENS**

Railways asks staff to install corona tracker

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

WITH A tentative target of ensuring at least a crore downloads within a few days, the Railways has asked all its 13 lakh employees and their family members to install the government's official COVID-19 tracking mobile app Aarogya Setu. The move is an attempt to give a big push to develop a database of robust numbers and add to the intended usefulness of the tech.

The Railway Board is learnt to have said that within about 24 hours, all its employees and their family members should get the app installed. The progress of numbers will be recorded every day on the official internal dashboard monitored at the highest level in the ministry.

Instructions have been communicated to also get about 13 lakh retired railway personnel and their family members to download the app, voluntarily. Taking into account serving as well as retired employees and their family members, the app should see over 1 crore downloads in a few days, as per rough calculations by officials.

Aarogya Setu seeks to enable people to assess by themselves their risk of getting infected by coronavirus. It uses the phone's tech to notify the user if another high-risk or COVID-19 positive person is nearby. Available in 11 languages, it has already been downloaded by over 1 crore users on the Android platform.

"It will calculate this based on their interaction with others, using cutting-edge Bluetooth technology, algorithms and artificial intelligence," a message from Chairman Railway Board Vinod Yadav to railway officers said.

"...the app detects other devices with 'Aarogya Setu' installed that come in the proximity of that phone. The app can then calculate the risk of infection based on sophisticated parameters if any of these contacts has tested positive," the message added.

NEWBORN BIRTH AND DEATH IN AMBULANCE

Charge of Muslim victimisation can't be proved, says probe; man sticks to claim

DEEP MUKHERJEE
JAIPUR, APRIL 5

A DAY after the family of a newborn, who died soon after birth in an ambulance, alleged that staff at a government hospital in Rajasthan's Bharatpur turned them away because they are Muslims, a report by the administration concluded this charge could not be proved.

The woman was referred to Jaipur by doctors at Bharatpur and while she was on her way in an ambulance, she delivered the baby. The newborn died soon after. As per the report, the father Irfan Khan had said in his statement that hospital staff had remarked, "*Tablighi Jamaat wahan se nikli hai* (Tablighi Jamaat has come out from there)".

On Sunday, a video surfaced on social media in which Khan is seen saying that he "thought" whatever happened to him was because he is a Muslim but this was only a "personal thought". He is also seen saying the staff had not told him his family couldn't be treated because they are Muslims.

However, speaking to *The Indian Express*, Khan alleged he said so "after officials asked him not to stretch the issue further".

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

DRDO nod to coverall suits made by Rly workshop

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

THE DEFENCE Research and Development Organisation Sunday cleared coverall suit samples made by a railway workshop, paving the way for mass production of this protective gear, critical in India's fight against the coronavirus outbreak.

Northern Railway, which made the breakthrough after another railway unit failed to get its samples passed, has raw material to make 3,000 coverall suits. It has decided to source raw material from a Yamunanagar-based vendor approved by the Textiles ministry to manufacture an additional 3,000 units.

It is the Jagadhari coaching workshop of Northern Railway which made the suits using "reverse engineering".

The government estimates the country's medical fraternity and other workers will require some 1.5 crore coveralls by June. These suits are incinerated after each use and are the most critical component in the Personal Protective Equipment kit with significant shortage in India.

"Now we can contribute in mitigating the shortfall of coveralls in the country to the extent possible. We have already placed orders for raw materials for more," said Arun Arora, Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer of Northern Railway, which will share the design specifications with other zones so that production can happen on a larger scale if needed.

The coverall suit made by the Jagadhari coaching workshop.

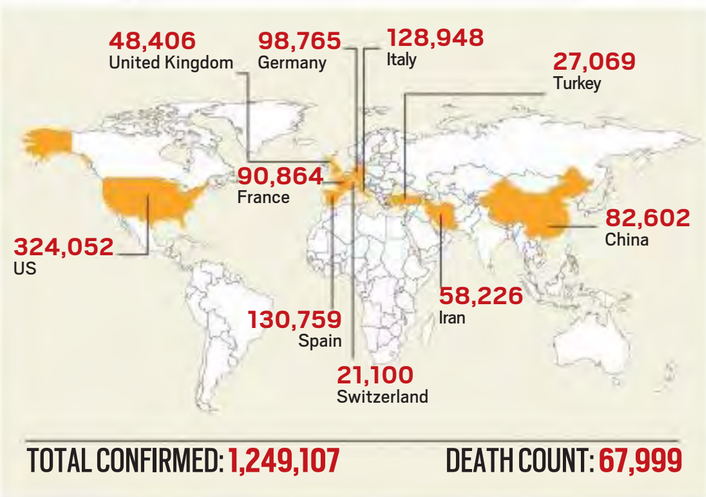
A Railway statement said that the national transporter will now aim to produce three sets of coverall suits per sewing machine per hour for 15 days.

Eighty-one coaches were earlier converted into isolation wards by this zonal unit, which has by now converted 340 coaches, readying 10 isolation trains and continuing to convert more.

Northern Railway is contemplating applying for a patent for the design of the isolation coach. "We will file for a patent... It is a unique Indian idea to show the world how in-use railway coaches can be turned into viable healthcare infrastructure in a time of crisis," Arora said.

The Rail Coach Factory, Kapurthala, has already made a prototype of a ventilator with its own design and in-house talent. The prototype will be sent to the ICMR for testing next week even as other two factories—the ICF, Chennai and Rail Wheel Plant, Bengaluru—also look to make ventilators with reverse engineering and outside collaboration.

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK
YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED DAILY



Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11:30 pm on April 5

Can a mother transmit the virus to foetus or newborn?

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS
PUNE, APRIL 5

LAST WEEK, a three-day-old baby and his mother tested positive for COVID-19 in a private lab in Mumbai, but subsequently tested negative in Kasturba Hospital. It is still unclear whether a pregnant woman runs the risk of transmitting the virus to her baby during pregnancy. While there is no concrete evidence for vertical transmission of SARS-CoV2 from mother to foetus, it is known that pregnancy involves a risk, after birth, of adverse outcomes from many respiratory viral infections. A virus may be transmitted after delivery either from mother during breastfeeding or from the hospital environment, various experts have said.

The World Health Organization notes that there is no evidence yet to show that pregnant women are more vulnerable or are at a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 than the general population. It has, however, advised pregnant women to wash their hands frequently, to avoid crowded spaces and to practice respiratory hygiene.

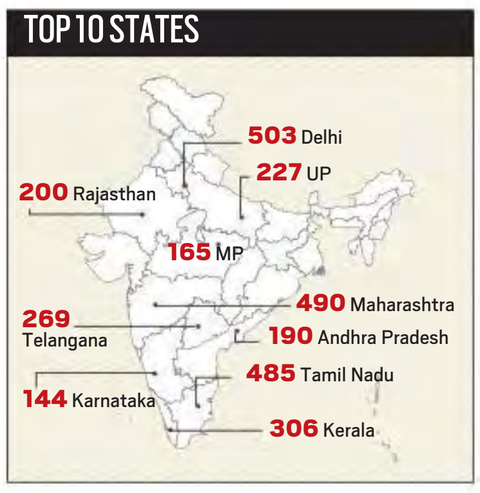
Experts at the College of American Pathologists flagged this concern in the *Archives of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine*. They cite the recent history of vertical maternal-foetal transmission of such emerging viral infections as the Zika virus, Ebola virus, Marburg virus and other agents. A March 24 article in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases Journal* too flagged such concerns while noting that the potential risk of vertical transmission is unclear.

In India, efforts have been made to create a pregnancy registry at the Indian Council of Medical Research. "Maternal management and foetal safety are a significant concern, but the infection is at a low level and there is not sufficient number of patients for our studies to assess the vulnerability of pregnant women and whether there was vertical transmission of COVID-19 virus to their babies," Dr R R Gangakhedkar, Head of the Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases Division at Indian Council of Medical Research, told The Indian Express.

At the ICMR's pregnancy registry, obstetricians have been asked to provide information about any adverse outcomes. "₹We have no evidence so far," he said. One pregnant woman who had delivered at AIIMS recently had been detected with COVID 19. The stress is therefore on respiratory and personal hygiene, including handwashing, and social distancing. While feeding the baby the distance between the infant and the mother is too small, "hence here we can suggest that she can express her milk", Dr Ganghakhedkar said.

So far no reliable evidence recommends any specific COVID-19 treatment for pregnant women. Before allowing drugs for pregnant women, clinical trials would be needed to prove the effectiveness of drugs and the effects on the foetus to establish a standardised treatment.

INDIA COUNT: 3,577 (83 DEATHS)



REST OF INDIA

Andaman and Nicobar Islands	10
Arunachal Pradesh	1
Assam	26
Bihar	30
Chandigarh	18
Chhattisgarh	9
Goa	7
Gujarat	122
Haryana	59
Himachal Pradesh	6
Jammu and Kashmir	106
Jharkhand	3
Ladakh	14
Manipur	2
Mizoram	1
Odisha	20
Puducherry	5
Punjab	57
Uttarakhand	22
West Bengal	80

Union Health Ministry update at 11 pm, April 5. Some states may have reported higher numbers. Only states with most cases are listed above.

275 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

SIMPLY PUT

Indian migrants, across India

The lockdown has led to an exodus of migrant workers struggling to reach their home states. Where do these migrants mostly come from, where do they work, in which sectors? Taking stock

SUSHANT SINGH & AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

THE EXODUS of migrant workers from the cities following the announcement of the 21-day lockdown threw the spotlight on the vast number of Indians who live outside their home states.

The total number of internal migrants in India, as per the 2011 census, is 45.36 crore or 37% of the country's population. This includes inter-state migrants as well as migrants within each state, while the recent exodus is largely due to the movement of inter-state migrants.

The annual net flows amount to about 1 per cent of the working age population. As per Census 2011, the size of the workforce was 48.2 crore people. This figure is estimated to have exceeded 50 crore in 2016 — the Economic Survey pegged the size of the migrant workforce at roughly 20 per cent or over 10 crore in 2016.

State to state, 2020

While there is no official data for the inter-state migrants in the country, estimates for 2020 have been made by Professor Amitabh Kundu of Research and information System for Developing countries. His estimates, which are based on the 2011 Census, NSSO surveys and economic survey, show that there are a total of about 65 million inter-state migrants, and 33 per cent of these migrants are workers. By conservative estimates, 30 per cent of them are casual workers and another 30 per cent work on regular basis but in the informal sector.

If you add street vendors, another vulnerable community which is not captured by the worker data, that would mean that there are 12 to 18 million people who are residing in states other than that of their origin and have been placed at a risk of losing their income. A study by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and Azim Premji University in 2019 estimates that 29% of the population in India's big cities is of daily wagers. This is the number of people which would be logically wanting to move back to their states.

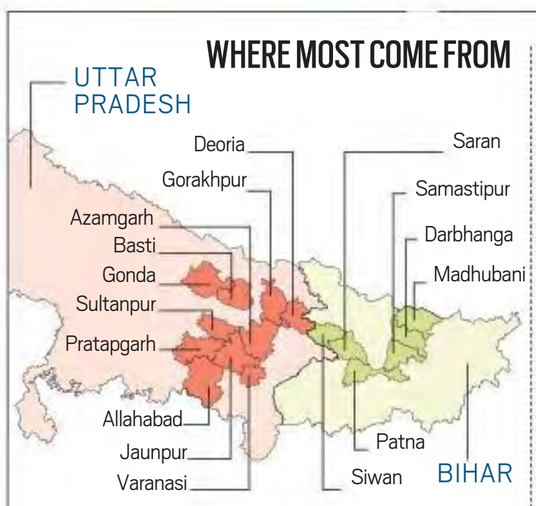
Professor Kundu's estimates show that Uttar Pradesh and Bihar account for the origin of 25 per cent and 14 per cent of the total inter-state migrants, followed by Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, at 6 per cent and 5 per cent. This means that around 4-6 million people would be wanting to return to Uttar Pradesh, and 1.8-2.8 million to Bihar. Another 700,000 to 1 million would be wanting to return to Rajasthan and 600,000-900,000 to Madhya Pradesh.

What they earn, experience

As per the 'Politics and Society Between Elections Survey' from 2017-19 conducted by the CSDS, the monthly household income of 22% daily and weekly wagers is up to Rs 2,000; of 32%, between Rs 2,000 and 5,000; of 25%, between 5,000 and 10,000; of 13%, between Rs 10,000 and 20,000; and of 8%, more than Rs 20,000. A CSDS survey during the recent Delhi Assembly elections also found that 20% of respondents reported their monthly household income to be less than Rs 10,000. Among migrants from Bihar and UP, this was even higher at 33% and 27%, respectively.

Professor Tariq Thachil of Vanderbilt University has worked on the circular migrant population in India. His research found that migrant populations neither wholly retain nor completely discard their village-based ethnic ties, which is witnessed by their willingness to walk hundreds of kilometres once their source of livelihood is taken away. His research, based on a large survey of 2,400 seasonal migrants sampled from 51 marketplaces across Lucknow, underscored the preeminence of the police in shaping the urban experiences of migrants, relative to their rural lives. Remarkably, 33% of respondents in the survey personally experienced violent police action within their past year in the city, while fewer than 5% had ever done so in their home villages.

Migrant labourers at Delhi's Anand Vihar terminal, during the rush of last week. *Praveen Khanna*



17 districts account for 25% of male out-migration in the country. The map shows 16; Ganjam in Odisha is not mapped.

Source: Customised from the Registrar General of India, based on Census 2001 in the Report of Working Group on Migration, 2017

SHARE OF MIGRANT WORKERS AMONG TOTAL WORKERS BY MAJOR SECTORS

	Rural		Urban	
Sector	Male	Female	Male	Female
Primary	4%	75%	20%	65%
Manufacturing	13%	59%	38%	51%
Public Services	16%	69%	40%	56%
Construction	8%	73%	32%	67%
Traditional Services	10%	65%	29%	55%
Modern Services	16%	66%	40%	52%
Total	**6%**	**73%**	**33%**	**56%**

Source: NSS 2007-08, Report of the Working Group in Migration, 2017

DISTRICTS, TOP ROUTES

To	From
Krishna	Chittoor
Ratnagiri	Mumbai
Chennai	Kachchh
Mumbai Suburban	Gorakhpur
Ratnagiri	Thane
Central Delhi	Gorakhpur
Patna	East Delhi
Central Delhi	Gwalior
North Delhi	Shahjahanpur
Sindhudurg	Mumbai
Mumbai	Lucknow
Sindhudurg	Thane
Haora	Dhanbad
North Delhi	Azamgarh
Moradabad	Chandigarh
Central Delhi	Jhansi
Vadodara	Mumbai Suburban
North Delhi	Bareilly
Saharsa	East Delhi
Jhansi	South delhi
Central Delhi	Nalanda
Central Delhi	Lucknow
Central Delhi	Begusarai
Central Delhi	Bhojpur
Ratnagiri	Raigarh
North Delhi	Araria
Saharsa	Amritsar
Mahbubnagar	Guntur

"The largest recipient was the Delhi region, which accounted for more than half of migration in 2015-16, while Uttar Pradesh and Bihar taken together account for half of total out-migrants."

Source: Economic Survey, 2016-17

Mostly in cities

That the inter-state migrant crisis after the lockdown was felt more by cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Surat is borne by the 2011 Census data. Professor Chinmay Tumbe of IIM Ahmedabad has highlighted that Delhi has a migration rate of 43%, of whom 88% are from other states and 63% are from rural areas. Mumbai has a migration rate of 55%, with 46% migrants from other states and 52% from rural areas. Surat, which witnessed police action on a group of migrants on Sunday, has a migration rate of 65%, with 50% migrants from other states and 76% from rural areas.

Professor Tumbe has also noted that the information about districts in originating states, from where these workers come and would have returned, is not current and is based on estimates from the 1990s. His paper, 'Urbanisation, Demographic Transition and the Growth of Cities in India, 1870-2020' has the data for source regions of migrants in major cities in 1990s, as the 2011 census data on it has not been released so far.

This data is important to identify the districts which should be on high alert for potential virus spread as these workers return to their homes. For example, Ganjam in coastal Odisha has a lot of people working in Gujarat and Professor Tumbe has noted that there have been instances recorded in the past which includes AIDS transmission via Surat. As Professor Siddharth Chandra's work shows, the 1918 influenza virus was carried to rural India in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar by soldiers who fought in Europe in the First World War. They returned by ships to Bombay and Madras and then carried the virus to their villages, causing a disaster which saw 18 million deaths in India.

District to district

District-wise migration data in the Economic Survey for 2016-17 show that the highest influx of migrants within the country is seen in city-districts such as Gurugram, Delhi and Mumbai along with Gautam Buddh Nagar (Uttar Pradesh); Indore, Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh); Bangalore (Karnataka); Thiruvallur, Chennai, Kancheepuram, Erode, Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu).

The districts showing the highest outward movement of migrant workers include Muzaffarnagar, Bijnor, Moradabad, Rampur, Kaushambi, Faizabad and 33 other districts in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Rudra Prayag, Tehri Garhwal, Pauri Garhwal, Pithoragarh, Bageshwar, Almora, Champawat in Uttarakhand; Churu, Jhunjhunu, Pali in Rajasthan; Darbhanga, Gopalganj, Siwan, Saran, Sheikhpura, Bhojpur, Buxar, Jehanabad in Bihar; Dhanbad, Lohardaga, Gumla in Jharkhand; and Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg in Maharashtra.

As per the Report of the Working Group on Migration, 2017 under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, 17 districts account for the top 25% of India's total male out-migration. Then of these districts are in UP, six in Bihar and one in Odisha (see map).

"Relatively less developed states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have high net out-migration. Relatively more developed states take positive CMM values reflecting net immigration: Goa, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. The largest recipient was the Delhi region, which accounted for more than half of migration in 2015-16, while Uttar Pradesh and Bihar taken together account for half of total out-migrants. Maharashtra, Goa and Tamil Nadu had major net in-migration, while Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh had major net out-migration," the Economic Survey had stated.

The Report of the Working Group on Migration shows that the share of migrant workers is the highest in construction sector for females (67 per cent in urban areas, 73 per cent in rural areas), while highest number of male migrant workers are employed in public services (transport, postal, public administration services) and modern services (financial intermediation, real estate, renting, education, health) at 16 per cent each and 40 per cent each in rural and urban areas, respectively.

Is burial or cremation safe? How to handle bodies of COVID-19 patients

TABASSUM BARNAGARWALA
MUMBAI, APRIL 5

LAST WEEK, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation of Mumbai issued a circular that bodies of all COVID-19 patients would be cremated at the nearest crematorium, without any rituals. The circular was later amended, allowing burials only if grounds were large enough.

Why was the order introduced?

The Municipal Commissioner in Mumbai is an empowered officer under the Epidemic Act, 1897, to issue orders to contain the COVID-19 epidemic. The commissioner said the circular was issued after a "community leader brought to my notice that existing burial grounds are in highly dense locality with high chances of contamination in dense community/ residential areas nearby". This was before the amendment allowing burials in larger grounds.

A general surgeon, aged 85, died in Hinduja Hospital after testing positive for COVID-19. After his body was discharged by the hospital on March 27, the family buried it without civic staff. This reportedly raised concerns in the BMC over whether precautions had been taken.

What has been recommended now?

The BMC has recommended the use of an electric or piped natural gas crematorium. The circular said packing the body in a plastic and burying still holds risk of contamination as decomposition is delayed in plastic. It said not more than five people will be allowed to attend the funeral.

But what about those who traditionally bury their dead?

The circular makes an exception. Those who insist on burial, it says, will be allowed only if the burial grounds are large enough and pose no risk of contamination in nearby areas. The circular does not, however, specify the size of the cemetery where burial will be allowed. The day the circular was issued, Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope told The Indian Express that the central government's guidelines for handling dead bodies must be followed in the state.

And what do the central guidelines say?

The Health Ministry's detailed guidelines are for handling of bodies of COVID-19 patients. These allow both cremation and burial, and make no mention of any risk of contamination from bodies if buried.

The body must be sealed in a leak-proof plastic bag. The guidelines allow only the face to be viewed by unzipping the bag, and do not permit bathing, kissing or hugging of the body. Family members are allowed to read religious lines and sprinkle holy water, as long as no one touches the body.

Embalming and autopsy must be avoided as the lungs of an COVID-19 patient can be infectious during an autopsy. If tubes or a catheter is removed, the wounds must be disinfected with one per cent hypochlorite solution and dressed in impermeable (leak-proof) material to ensure body fluids don't ooze out. The nose and mouth must be plugged to prevent body fluids from oozing out.

After the body is put in it, the bag must again be disinfected with hypochlorite. The bag can be covered in a cloth provided by the family. The disinfected bag does not pose a risk during transportation or handling. But those handling it should wear personal protective equipment.

Does burial pose a risk of infection?

Bodies of people infected with microbes such as HIV and SARS-CoV-2 come under Biosafety Levels II and III. Burial is considered safe as the body is sealed. "The body takes 7-10 days to decompose, and the body fluids can take 3-4 days to dry up. Theoretically speaking, the virus lives until there are body fluids. But this infection spreads by droplets. There has been no case recorded where body fluids leaked from a body contaminated groundwater and spread infection," said Dr Satish Pawar, joint director, Directorate of Health Services, Maharashtra.

If the body is cremated, the ash does not pose any risk either. Infection is a risk only for mortuary workers, doctors who do the autopsy and those who handle the body. If all precautions are followed, then both burial and cremation are considered safe. Large gatherings are to be avoided because family members are possible contacts.

How soon must burial or cremation take place?

Dr Harish Pathak, head of the forensics department in Mumbai's KEM Hospital, said a body must be disposed quickly. If it has to be kept in a mortuary, it should be preserved between 4-6 degrees.°C For disposing of infectious animal carcasses, the World Health Organization mandates a proper incinerator, its primary chamber at 800°C and secondary chamber at 1000°C; for biomedical waste, an auto-clave machine is used.

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

ONLY PEOPLE CAN UNDO WHAT PEOPLE HAVE CREATED.

— MARIANE PEARL

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

SECURING FRONTLINES

Even as India ramps up production of medical gear, it must add its voice to call for global cooperation on the matter

ON APRIL 4, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on the country's health authorities to ensure availability of essential medical equipment such as masks, gloves and PPEs (personal protection equipment) for doctors. PM Modi's directive, at a meeting of the empowered groups constituted for planning and ensuring implementation of COVID-19 response activities, is significant given that concerns about the unavailability of PPEs for doctors have been raised in several quarters. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, for instance, has said that hospitals under the Delhi government are facing a shortage of PPEs. A survey conducted by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances has shone a light on the worries of district collectors and district magistrates about the shortage of medical gear. According to the survey, 47 per cent officers "felt that inadequate availability of PPEs in district/sub-district hospitals is an area of concern".

On February 27, the WHO issued a warning about an impending shortage of medical gear: "The current global stockpile of PPE is insufficient, particularly for medical masks and respirators; the supply of gowns and goggles is soon expected to be insufficient. Surging global demand — driven not only by the number of COVID-19 cases but also by misinformation, panic buying and stockpiling — will result in further shortages of PPE globally". But India paid heed to the global health agency's concern only after it issued another warning in mid-March — on March 19, it prohibited the export of protective gear. India has also ramped up production of PPEs — the DRDO, Bengaluru-based Bharat Electronics and 12 private entrepreneurs are involved in this endeavour. The Centre also plans to import one crore PPE kits by April 10. However, with global competition for medical gear intensifying, pulling off imports may not be an easy task.

"The chronic, global shortage of PPEs is one of the most urgent threats to our collective ability to save lives. The problem cannot be solved without international cooperation," says the WHO. But in the scramble for medical gear for frontline health workers, the agency's plea seems to be falling on deaf ears. France and Germany have accused the US of unfair practices — paying far above the market price for masks from the top producer, China, and winning contracts through higher bids even after the European buyers believed that deals had been sealed. The WHO has asked countries to desist from such practices and called "for equitable distribution of medical supplies". While it continues to bolster its domestic capacity to battle the pandemic, India would do well to add its weight to such voices.

BAD OLD WAYS

Acquittal of Omar Sheikh by court is more proof that Pakistan continues to play dangerous games with militancy, terrorism

THE ACQUITTAL BY the Sindh High Court in Pakistan of Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh in the case of the murder of journalist Daniel Pearl was foretold — an investigation with many holes, a loose case built by the prosecution, and an eco-system in which killing in the name of jihad is not a crime. His 2002 conviction in the trial court came at a time when Pakistan had joined the US "war on terror", and Pervez Musharraf, the military ruler at the time, was under tremendous pressure from the Bush Administration to go after terrorist groups operating from Pakistan. The killing of the intrepid Wall Street Journal reporter, on assignment in Pakistan for a story on militant groups and their links to al Qaeda in that country, shocked the world, and left journalists everywhere, especially those covering Pakistan, shaken. It exposed the roots that al Qaeda had struck within Pakistani jihadist groups, and the complicity of sections, if not the whole, of the ISI.

It also made clear that the distinctions that Pakistan still seeks to make between jihadists on the basis of who they target — India, US or Pakistan — are specious. Who is Sheikh, after all? A British national who, during the war in Bosnia in the early 1990s, was ferrying relief supplies to the Bosnian side, and soon after that joined the Muzaffarabad-based Harkat ul Ansar, a group that had fought in the Afghan jihad and was closely linked to the Pakistani intelligence, and was then deployed in the proxy war in Kashmir. Masood Azhar, later of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, was also a member of this group. Both were caught in India separately and spent time in Indian jails, before the Vajpayee government turned them over to the Taliban at Kandahar in exchange for the hostages in IC-814. Azhar went on to form the JeM, and Omar Sheikh re-surfaced when he was caught for the Pearl killing. After the Mumbai terrorist attacks, Sheikh contributed to India-Pakistan tensions by making a phone call to President Asif Ali Zardari pretending to be the then Indian external affairs minister, Pranab Mukherjee. The Mumbai attacks trial itself has reached a dead end in Pakistan.

After a stern message from the US, describing the Sheikh acquittal as "an affront to the victims of terrorism everywhere", the powers that be have re-arrested him under the Maintenance of Public Order law for 90 days. Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has said the government would appeal against his acquittal. But who can guarantee that three months down the line, the Pakistan government will not blithely declare him "missing", as it recently did with Masood Azhar. Hafiz Saeed, leader of the Lashkar-e-Toiba, has been a trailblazer in how to overturn an MPO arrest. Despite its own sufferings, Pakistan continues to play dangerous games with terrorism and militancy, nurturing the false belief that this is the way to achieving its strategic goals in south Asia.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY

Lockdown trade-offs

How Covid-19 is reordering the world of work

MANISH SABHARWAL

ADVICE AROUND DEALING with a virus outbreak is not very different between the "jaan hai to jahaan hai" from Indian poetry (if there is life, there is the world), Warren Buffet (you have to survive in order to succeed) and medical education (post-mortems have a certainty that prescriptions don't). Rich New York — per capita income of $93,000 for nine million people — is unable to handle being virus-struck New York, so resource-constrained India — per capita income of $2,000 for 1.3 billion people — chose wisely with our 21-day lockdown.

The outlook for work is unmodellable until the virus is controlled — the first input into a GPS is where you are. However, the diverse national, organisational and individual responses to the planet taking a gap year offer political scientists, economists, sociologists, psychologists, entrepreneurs, board directors, managers and central bankers the mother of all randomised control trials about work. Writer F Scott Fitzgerald suggested a first-rate intelligence has the ability to hold two opposed ideas at the same time and function; the lockdown has surfaced many trade-offs about work that are easy — and wrong — to position as conflicts.

First, lives vs livelihoods. Everything we are doing to murder the virus is murdering the economy and this is the right sequence. But no amount of CSR, government borrowing or printing money can substitute for the wages and self-employment income of our 50-crore labour force and their dependents. If the lockdown continues beyond two months, we must plan for citizens' well being to move out of the commercial possibilities to the realm of fiscal policy.

Second, employers vs employees. Employers can't do deficit financing because they are rivers (flow) not oceans (stock). Shareholders and lenders don't pay salaries — customers do. It's a mistake to believe that Tata Steel, HDFC or Infosys are the typical Indian employer — only 19,500 companies of our 6.3 crore enterprises have a paid-up capital greater than Rs 10 crore. If schools don't receive fees, teachers don't get paid.

Third, formal vs informal employment. Formal employment pays higher wages than informal employment because of the higher productivity that comes from access to talent, technology, and credit. But the lockdown also demonstrates the higher resilience of formal employers to demand shocks, their ability to handle supply chain disruptions, and their efficacy as vehicles for traceable fiscal transfers.

> April 15 and May 1 are important milestones for employers and economic policy. The lockdown's continuance, partial lifting or end must be decided on purely medical grounds (even though it turns out epidemiologists are like economists — they don't agree with their past selves or each other). If it ends, employers will return to normal quickly, despite a wage spike in cities for 15 days. If it continues, employers will accelerate fixed costs, supply chains, and debt servicing actions.

Fourth, mind vs hand workers. The lockdown impacts people who use their minds and hands differently — our guesstimate is that 65 per cent of our graduates can work from home but only 10 per cent of our non-graduates can do so. And while knowledge workers have delivered lockdown continuity from home, time will tell if they deliver productivity. Unscientific feedback about home working locked down employees suggests CEOs agree with Andrew Carnegie who answered the question "How many employees work at your company?" with "About half!"

Fifth, the current vs the future generation. There is no doubt that governments should borrow massively to handle the crisis. But the multi-decade narcissism of stealing from our grandchildren without a virus or world war has taken debt to 225 per cent of global GDP and US student debt to $1.5 trillion (half of which was unserviceable before the crisis). Economic complexity and size allow higher leverage but this debt overhang blunts economic flexibility in handling the virus lockdown. Presentism is understandable in a crisis but trusteeship needs financial prudence.

Sixth, residents vs migrants. The virus won't change the reality of taking people to jobs rather than taking jobs to people, but it has exposed the ovarian lottery. The residents of West and South India have much lower vulnerability than the economic migrants from North and East India. The huge overseas diaspora of Kerala (about 10 per cent) and the huge Bihari diaspora in Kerala (about 9 per cent) expose how Kerala and Bihar have been economic wastelands that forced migration for many of their residents.

Seven, liquidity vs solvency. Employers fund themselves with debt and equity — equity is payable when able and debt is payable when due. The lockdown creates debt challenges and the RBI's recent measures were proactive, comprehensive and prudent. But liquidity can't solve solvency problems, central banks aren't mandated to act as commercial banks and should be careful with "whatever it takes", and solvency problems need a fiscal response. European and American employers have been promised $8 trillion "virus" state loans and subsidies — about two years of their profits. India can't afford this calibration but will need to do more.

And finally, the rule of written law vs law of spoken rule. The written regulatory cholesterol for Indian employers — 57,000 compliance, 3,100 filing and 4,000 annual changes — is painful enough without spoken rules like arresting employers for considering attendance in paying salaries, threatening employers for not providing housing, telling parents not to pay school fees, etc. Some of these are therapeutic or "fog of war" directives but they need discouraging in favour of a rule of law that is justiciable, documented and fair. Without employers there are no employees.

April 15 and May 1 are important milestones for employers and economic policy. The lockdown's continuance, partial lifting or end must be decided on purely medical grounds (even though it turns out epidemiologists are like economists — they don't agree with their past selves or each other). If it ends, employers will return to normal quickly, despite a wage spike in cities for 15 days. If it continues, employers will accelerate fixed costs, supply chains, and debt servicing actions. And policy makers will have to decide whether the most effective relief vehicle is paying employers, employees or citizens.

Military historian John Keegan suggests the most important role of leaders in a crisis is a "Mask of Command". Business leaders must take this advice till the next lockdown milestones but recognise that the mask is a mask because the end of this crisis is unmodellable. And policy makers must start thinking about world of work trade-offs because this crisis will end.

The writer is chairman, Teamlease Services

VIRUS AND I

It is asking us to open the box of our inner lives

SWAMI AGNIVESH & VALSON THAMPU

IN GOOD FAITH

THE CORONAVIRUS HAS forced us to fall back on ourselves. It will, for the duration of the lockdown, put the cart of civilisation back by decades. No commercial flights, national or international. No trains. Historians tell us that the Great Plague, which killed a third of Europe's population in the 14th century, was transported from Asia to Europe by "trade, travel and improved means of communication". To globalise trade and traffic is also to inflate epidemics into pandemics.

Our immediate concern is stark and simple: How are we to cope with this period of being home-bound? Concerns are expressed from various parts of the world that this derailment of routine could breed depression and boredom, and undermine the mental health of the people. Of course, potentially, the danger is there. But does it have to necessarily afflict us? Is there no way we can make a virtue of the present necessity?

To answer this question, we need to examine the source of these apprehensions. When we do so, we encounter an imbalance — the imbalance between our reliance on the external world and our rootedness in our inner life. The basic issue is not that we find ourselves all of a sudden in a state of social isolation. The issue is that we are clueless about managing this predicament. Ironically, even those who habitually complain of being busy and hectic in their routine life share the same predicament. For long, they had no time. Now they have plenty of time — and they stagger under the weight of it!

> An aspect of the cultural conditioning that human beings suffer in a consumerist-materialistic culture is that depending almost entirely on the external means and props becomes second nature to them. Life becomes a routine of predictable encounters and preferred consumption of means and provisions. Individuals develop umbilical cords with the 'world out there' — a prospect of its severance activates anxiety.

An aspect of the conditioning that human beings suffer in a consumerist-materialistic culture is that depending almost entirely on external means and props becomes second nature to them. Life becomes a routine of predictable encounters and preferred consumption. Individuals develop umbilical cords with the "world out there" — a prospect of its severance activates anxiety.

There is a story of a beggar who used to sit at the entrance of a temple on a wooden box and beg for alms. One day, a saintly old man came by. As usual, the beggar pleaded for help. "What are you sitting on?" the old man asked him. "My box, sir," the beggar replied meekly. "Get up. Open the box," said the old man in a tone of authority. The beggar complied. He found the box to be full of gold. Perhaps our predicament is not unlike this — our inner treasures taking the place of the gold in the beggar's box. We are poorer for being unaware of it. As a result, we think we are worth nothing, except for whatever we receive from the external world. May be a lowly virus is saying, "Get up! Open the box of your inner life. Discover the great riches on which you sit, even as you go on playing beggar." This can turn out to be an exhilaratingly liberating experience.

As a rule, material means and social facilities have no intrinsic worth. They have instrumental worth. Their worth depends on the worth of the one who uses them. If so, the primary thing to do is to enhance our intrinsic worth. This is the purpose of spirituality. Hence, the beneficial connection between spirituality and solitude. To our seers and sanyasis, solitude was an aid, not a hindrance or an affliction. It is when we are cut off from external props that we know where we stand and what we really need. This does not constitute a negative reflection on material and social resources. The point is that developing inner resources is basic to relating in wholesome responsibility to the realities and responsibilities in the world. It is for the sake of the world that we need to develop our inner riches. The alternative is to exist as parasites.

Crisis tests the character of a people. The apprehension of our inability to cope with life-in-lockdown points to the fact that we neglected the duty to "stock up" inner resources. In the wake of the lockdown, everyone experienced an urgency to stock up provisions. It makes sense to provide for uncertain times. Surely, the same principle applies to our inner life too. As human beings, we cannot subsist on physical nourishment alone. That truth underlies the anxiety we experience today.

Agnivesh is a Vedic scholar and social activist and Thampu| was principal of St Stephen's College, Delhi

APRIL 6, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

Assam declared disturbed area

AFSPA IN ASSAM

THE WHOLE OF Assam, except the North Cachar Hills District, has been declared a "disturbed" area and brought under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), following the deadlock over the seven-month-old agitation on the foreign nationals issue. A notification issued by the governor, I P Singh, under section 3 of the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act, 1958, will be effective from tomorrow. Talks by Central leaders, including the prime minister and officials, with representatives of the All-Assam Students Union and the Gana Sangram Parishad to work out a mutually acceptable "cut-off" line to identify "foreigners" in Assam have so far yielded little results.

JANATA CHURN

THE JANATA PARTY will hold its two-day convention on April 19 and 20 to elect a new president in place of Chandra Shekhar and to discuss the party's strategy in the coming assembly elections. According to sources, the Janata Party may face its first serious crisis after the third split when it discusses its strategy for assembly elections. A proposal for electoral understanding with the Charan Singh-led Lok Dal — renewed today by Biju Patnaik and Madhu Limaye at a morning meeting with Chandra Shekhar — is certain to meet stiff opposition from Morarji Desai.

MOSCOW-KABUL TALKS

BOTH AFGHANISTAN AND the Soviet Union have endorsed a treaty on the temporary stay of a limited contingent of Soviet troops on Afghan territory. Radio Kabul reported that "the terms and conditions of the treaty had been approved by the presidium of the revolutionary council at its recent meeting." The terse announcement gave no details of the agreement. Both Afghanistan and the Soviet Union have maintained that the Soviet troops were in Afghanistan at the invitation of the Afghan government. But there had been no public reference to a treaty.

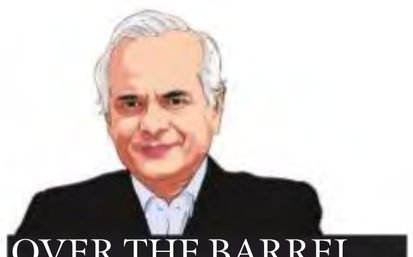
WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"In another slap in the face of democracy itself, the federal government is now preparing to circumvent procurement laws and scrutiny, and is considering assigning the task of purchasing medical equipment related to fighting Covid-19 through the Nepal Army."

— The KATHMANDU POST

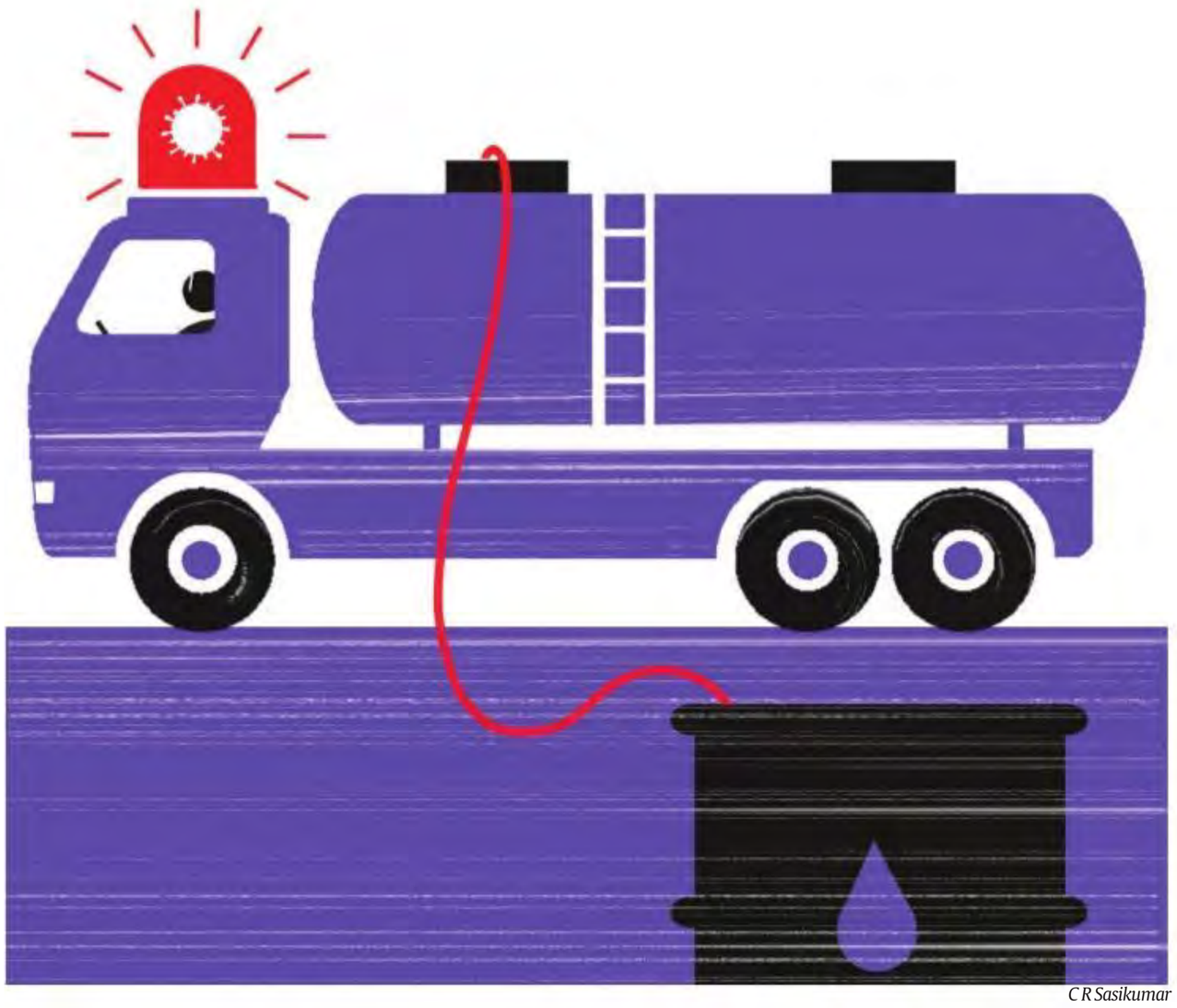
Oil in a post-Covid world

Behaviours will shift, uncertainties will deepen. India should build strategic reserves, use alternatives like natural gas and increase efficiency of its oil companies



OVER THE BARREL

BY VIKRAM S MEHTA



C R Sasikumar

Things fall apart; the Centre cannot hold/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world — **W B Yeats**

IN THE MIDST of a global pandemic of epic dimensions, one is hesitant to write about the narrow subject of petroleum. It seems so trivial. But then, if there is one certainty, it is that human ingenuity and technology will push us, sooner (hopefully) than later, into a post-COVID world. And at that time, India will, once again, confront the challenge of oil and gas supply security. We should, therefore, ask: What will be the landscape of the petroleum sector, post-COVID? And what should India do now to prepare for an uncertain and contingent energy future?

The centre has indeed "fallen apart" in the international petroleum market. The concept of MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) deterred the nuclear powers during the Cold War. It has had no such effect on the oil powers. For, at a time when the virus had pushed the global economy into recession, the proxies of the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS) and the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, took a set of decisions last month that knocked the economic props from under the oil market. The Saudis decided to flood the market to hold onto market share and the Russians accepted the consequent decline in prices to push the US shale industry to the wall. Both may achieve their objectives but they have sounded the death knell of OPEC and possibly that of the oil industry as well.

In the late 1990s, *The Economist* did a story on oil prices. The cover page had a picture of an oil barrel with an arrow painted in red slicing downwards across the barrel with "$5?" written in bold on the side. I am reminded of this article because it is reflective of current conditions. Today, the price of oil, at just above $30/bbl (at the time of writing), is at its lowest in a decade, and volatile downwards. The average price in 2019 was $64/bbl. The reason is two-fold. One, the Saudis have ramped up production from 9.8mbd (before the March meeting) to in excess of 12 mbd today. And two, there has been an unprecedented COVID-induced crash in demand. This is because of the lockdown of the two main drivers of oil consumption — transportation and industry. It is estimated that oil consumption in the current quarter will fall by approximately 25 mbd. This is almost as much as OPEC's production. The Saudis and Russia may still come to an understanding that rallies the price but it would not surprise me if *The Economist* wrote another cover story with a similar picture, except with "$20?" instead of "$5?" written next to the arrow.

Three verities now hang over the petroleum market.

One, every major oil-exporting country will face a budgetary crisis. Qatar has the most robust balance sheet of all OPEC members. But it still needs an oil price of around $40/bbl to balance its books. Algeria has the weakest. It needs an excess of $100/bbl. Saudi Arabia is at the Algerian end of the spectrum requiring a price of around $80/bbl. This does not mean these countries are about to go financially belly up. Most of them, the Gulf producers, in particular, have abundant sovereign reserves. But what it does mean is they will be hard-pressed to sustain their social and economic commitments. They will have to cut back on subsidies, raise taxes and the citizens will be required to tighten their belts. This will not be well-received and India should build into its oil supply plans the likelihood of civil strife in these countries.

Two, the international oil industry will be reconfigured. Already, at current prices, a large number of companies are finding it difficult to cover their cash costs and have been forced to cut production and shutter operations. At even lower prices, they will become bankrupt. Whatever the final outcome, one fact is clear. Those that survive the carnage will have substantially slimmed balance sheets and reduced valuations. Exxon's market capitalisation has, for instance, halved over the past month. Against this backdrop, we should drop the expectation of international interest in BPCL. Or for that matter ME investment into India. The $40-billion Ratnagiri refinery project by Saudi Aramco and UAE will certainly not see the light of day. We should also expect a drop in the intensity of domestic exploration.

Three, the world, post-COVID will be different from the world pre-COVID. Behaviours will shift and these will deepen uncertainties. "Social distancing" may change the dynamics of "shared mobility". Teleporting may reduce business travel. Heightened awareness of the porosity of national boundaries may accelerate the push towards decarbonisation? These uncertainties will push the petroleum market deeper into no man's land.

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India cannot escape its own domestic verity. Whatever be the shape of the post-COVID international petroleum market, India will be dependent on it to secure its domestic energy requirement. The question should, therefore, be asked. What should the decision-makers do today to respond to such a contingent and uncertain future?

I have the following four suggestions.

One, it should fill the oil caverns with strategic reserves. Prices may fall further but rather than bottom fish, it should leverage the availability of capacity to secure discounted supplies. The world has run out of storage capacity and producers may pay premium dollar to find space for their unsold cargoes.

Second, it should increase its imports of gas (LNG) from Australia, Africa and the US. This will reduce the political risks of dependency on oil supplies from the Middle East. Gas is also now economically competitive. The landed price of LNG is low enough to kick-start some of the stranded gas-based power plants.

Third, it should unthread the "patchwork quilt of authority" exercised by bureaucrats, regulators and politicians, which today stifles management and operational efficiency of the petroleum companies.

And finally, it should create an institutional basis for an integrated energy policy. If there is one message we must internalise from COVID, it is the importance of collaboration and coordination.

The writer is chairman and senior fellow, Brookings India

Let no one go hungry

Utilise FCI stock for those who have ration cards and those who don't, provide food to urban poor

SIRAJ HUSSAIN AND AJIT RANADE

NEARLY ONE-FIFTH of India's labour force consists of internal migrants. As per the 2011 census, a quarter of the urban population consists of migrants. These tend to be predominantly male, from the less developed northern states, in the lower income strata, and dependent on daily wages or precarious livelihoods. The impact of the lockdown, effected from midnight of March 24, has been particularly severe on migrant workers. Due to uncertainty over the duration of the lockdown, and about their own livelihoods and food security, the lockdown has led to massive reverse migration from cities back to villages. Further, due to the absence of train and bus services, many of these workers took to simply walking back. This was despite the assurances of food and shelter from various "host" state governments, which unfortunately came only after their images were flashing all over the media. The ground reality of inadequate preparation or insufficient provision means that neither their anxiety nor plight is assuaged. Migrant workers tend to depend on public eating places or community arrangements for food. Under a lockdown, there is simply no choice for them, except to depend on the government's efforts or charitable organisations.

Fortunately, the government has a large stock of wheat and rice procured over the last three years. The buffer norm for April 1 is 21.4 million tonnes, against which the country had about 77.7 million tonnes on March 1: This comprises 27.5 million tonnes of wheat and 50.2 million tonnes of rice. In most districts of India, the Food Corporation of India and state agencies have a storage capacity of more than the three months requirement of the public distribution system. The warehouses are spread across all the districts in every state. The government has already announced that an additional quantity of five kg of foodgrains will be provided, free of cost, to all ration card holders for the next three months. Most of the unorganised labour and families migrating back from their place of work will probably have their ration cards in the villages itself. So, it should not be much of a problem for them to find food during the period of lockdown. But, for those who do not have ration cards in the villages, it is the right time to use this extra stock of foodgrains.

In villages, primary schools have facilities for cooking mid-day meals for children. Some anganwadis also have this facility. This infrastructure can be used to provide cooked meals to those who do not have ration cards in the villages. The government can easily offer to meet their requirement of wheat and rice over the next three weeks and panchayats can be asked to meet a part of the expenditure required to purchase vegetables, spices and cooking oil. Due to a steep drop in demand — especially from the hotel, restaurant and catering sectors — and due to the closure of mandis and difficulties in transportation, the prices of poultry, milk, fruits and vegetables have crashed in the producing areas. The village panchayats which take up such a feeding programme must be provided Rs 20 per person per day from State Disaster Relief Fund for the expenditure on vegetables, cooking oil, spices, which are not covered by the PDS. In some villages, the local community may also be willing to help the panchayats to feed such people. Efforts must also be made by the panchayats to raise donations in kind from the local community for rabi pulses like chana (chickpea), masoor (lentil), matar (field pea) which are available in plenty in pulse-growing states.

The most distressed at present are those stuck in the cities, or who have been walking hundreds of kilometres to reach their homes in small towns and villages. The district collectors should be allocated funds from the State Disaster Relief Fund to provide them with food and open all community buildings en route for them.

In urban areas, as per the Periodic Labour Force Survey, there were about 1.6 crore casual labourers and four crore self-employed persons in 2017-18. Even after the reverse migration to villages, there would still be millions of them who are stuck in cities at their place of work. These are people who do not have any savings or source of income which can sustain them during the period of the lockdown. These people living in slums, in the poorer areas of cities, are in need of urgent assistance for food, at least for the next three weeks.

The states must engage NGOs, factories and charities including religious organisations to raise funds for meeting the expenditure on milk, eggs, cooking oil and vegetables, and even soaps and sanitisers. More than 67,000 NGOs are registered with the Niti Aayog on their NGO Darpan platform — which was created to bring about greater partnership between the government and the voluntary sector, and to foster transparency, efficiency and accountability. This is the time to use such a platform. The Centre can easily provide free rice and wheat to the NGOs from its stock and the NGOs can provide cooked meals in urban areas for the next three weeks. For one crore individuals, for three weeks, the government needs to provide just about 75,000 tonnes of rice. Since the milling of wheat would be difficult due to the closure of flour mills, only rice can be provided at this stage.

The rabi harvest is expected to be a bumper one. The utilisation of the FCI stock — for not only the ration card holders but also the non-ration card holders, and for providing food to the poor stuck in urban areas — is the most appropriate use of the foodgrain stock with the government. This is urgent and must be done.

Hussain is former Union agriculture secretary, and Ranade is chief economist, Aditya Birla Group

Pandemic and prejudice

Growing up in India with a Chinese mother hasn't been easy. Covid makes it worse

JWALA GUTTA

"CHINA KA maal", "half Chinese" and "chinki", of course. I get a lot of this on Twitter when I disagree with a majority view on something. There's a new addition: I'm a "half Corona". I've developed a thick skin. I also know these are the same people who will troll me, but if we meet in person, will ask for a selfie. Still, it's not been easy growing up as the child of a Chinese mother. Now, with COVID-19, the trolls have a new word to fling at me, and others from the Northeast.

What we don't realise as Indians when we call someone "corona" or "Chinese virus" is that we ourselves have a large number of cases of malaria and over 2 lakh Indians die of tuberculosis each year. It is contagious and high numbers of malaria are also down to our country's poor hygiene standards. Now, imagine if an Indian walking past in a foreign country gets called "malaria" or "TB carrier".

My mother never complained about how tough it was for her to adjust in a new culture, but it wasn't easy growing up as a child with a mixed heritage. Any difference of opinion in the extended family would lead to me being told patronisingly that it wasn't my fault — it was just something I was taught by my "Chinese mother".

People don't realise but I have abhorred attention since I was a kid because of all the staring back then. When I was younger, I thought it was only because I looked different — I was tall and fair, with a slightly different face. But I never understood the racism angle to it. I used to explain patiently to the kids who taunted me that I simply had a bigger face so my eyes looked small. In my twenties, though, the real import of all this name-calling hit me. I realised how none of it was acceptable. I saw our people from the Northeast being discriminated against and facing violence, even in big cities.

I want them to know they are as Indian as anyone else. I understand it's difficult, but if you get harassed, don't think twice before approaching the judiciary and give courage to others. The more people complain, the more difficult it will get to ignore this harassment.

Chinese food habits are under scrutiny right now. But they are as "weird" as, say, exotic insects being served in the streets in Thailand or something else in Japan, or some might even say, in India. I probably would never venture into the wet markets in China, and when we visited China, my parents didn't either. But my father was very excited about trying out different kinds of meat. And why not? Who are we to question their culture and eating habits when we don't like being questioned about ours? There's a way to convey legitimate concerns, and it isn't by retaliating against an entire culture or blaming a whole race.

There are several misconceptions about the Chinese in India: That they don't have any freedom, and none of them are happy because it's a dictatorial system. However, I don't know how much freedom of speech we have in our country — look at all the trolling and the IT cells. I see both my uncles, and a grandmother in her 90s, who are all perfectly happy there. My grandmother lives alone and refuses to move in with us in India, despite us having all the typically required Indian comforts of cooks and house helps.

My great grandfather came to India, studied with Tagore and was named "Shantidoot" by Mahatma Gandhi for carrying the message of peace amidst distrust. He was the chief editor of a Singapore-Chinese newspaper and wanted to translate Gandhi's autobiography. That's how my mother came to India to help him. He died in Wardha and his grave is at Kasturba Medical hospital.

There are other things about the Chinese that we should, ideally, be using as markers of comparison. I first travelled to Guangzhou in 2002, and saw why that country is on the top of the medal charts in the Olympics. They have two-hour lunch breaks, and you see people in formal office clothes playing ping-pong at tables set up on the streets. They ensure that their corporate employees too get enough physical activity. At recreational stadiums, anyone between age three and 90 will be seen playing a sport, and it'll be a packed house.

I'm not as hardworking as my mother and I've only inherited her skin and Chinese food habits of eating bland. But the Chinese are the most hardworking people I know. My mother works from 8 am to 6 pm running a successful consultancy for pharmaceutical companies. She had to adjust to a South Indian family who never completely accepted her looks. In China, she was used to good food. But she was denied the comfort food she craved when she was pregnant with me. Not everyone was happy I wasn't born a boy. But my parents stood by each other, so I'm immensely proud of what they've done for us.

Because of my heritage, I'll never generalise anything about Indians or the Chinese. I treat everyone equally and don't see religious or caste distinctions. I have broader perspectives. Because I am a public figure, you can question my game, but never my patriotism. I've stood up more than most of my trolls ever have for the national anthem and those of my opponents.

I know the importance of respecting others and of humanity, something we need as we, Indians, battle COVID-19.

The writer is a World Championship and Commonwealth Games medallist in badminton

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SAFETY AND BIGOTRY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Life and death' (IE, April 3). While the government and local administrations are fighting against the coronavirus pandemic by instituting and enforcing the lockdown, religious leaders like Maulana Saad not only instigated gatherings and defied the law, they have also risked thousands of lives. The local police should also be interrogated as to why such a gathering was allowed.

Bal Govind, *Noida*

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Life and death' (IE, April 3). The holding of a huge congregation for three days comprising of more than a thousand of participants (mostly foreign delegates) by Tablighi Jamaat is an act of criminal negligence. It also reflects poorly on the Delhi police. There are some unscrupulous clerics still calling upon Muslims to collect on the terrace for prayers in defiance of government directives. This is not the time to defy safety measures.

Ravi Mathur, *via email*

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Life and death' (IE, April 3). Until the lockdown began, there were several large gatherings, religious and non-religious, in the country. Each such event could have potentially seeded the virus into the population and should have therefore been cancelled or prevented. The Tablighi Jamaat organisers are at fault but it's wrong to vilify the whole Muslim community. Recklessness, like terrorism, has no religion.

S S Paul, *Nadia*

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

VALLEY, CHEATED

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Another misstep in J&K' (IE, April 3,). The move to grant domicile is a crude administrative as well as political step by the Central government. It will make the people of the Kashmir Valley feel duped. For how long will they go on being taken for a ride in such rough-shod manner ? It also goes against the spirit of cooperation and accommodation that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been seeking since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Dharamvir Sharma, *Hoshiarpur*

UTTARAKHAND FINDS A WAY

How a Dehradun sugar mill is transacting with farmers while countering Covid-19

Government-run Doiwala Sugar Company has eliminated the use of paper receipts and physical contact

LALMANI VERMA
DEHRADUN, APRIL 5

SOHAN SINGH, a sugarcane farmer from Majri village, had an unusual experience when he sold his produce last week at the state government-run Doiwala Sugar Company Limited campus in Dehradun. The Doiwala Sugar Company Limited is one of the four government-run sugar mills in the state. This particular mill is estimated to crush around 30-lakh quintals of sugarcane in the current crushing season (2019-2020) that will end in April. Farmers registered with cane societies of Doiwala, Dehradun, Jwalapur, Roorkee (Uttarakhand) and Ponta (Himachal Pradesh, supply their agricultural produce to this sugar mill, which is around 22 km from Dehradun city.

Last Tuesday morning, when Singh reached the mill, he was asked to get a token number from the counter so that he could enter the sugar mill premises. He was carrying a trolley loaded with sugarcane. The token was meant to enable him to enter at an allotted time without any rush or hassle. As his turn was supposed to come later, he went back home, which was in the town. A few hours later, he received a phone call from the mill office staff, asking him to reach the mill in half-an-hour and deliver his agricultural produce.

Singh reached there, displayed his token at the gate and drove his tractor and a sugarcane-laden trolley inside the sugar mill. But just before entering, the mill's security guard drew Singh's attention to a notice displayed there and asked him to clean his hands with the soap and tap water, which was kept there, to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

On reaching the weighing machine, which was positioned about 15 metres from the entry gates, Singh took out his mobile phone from the pocket and read a code from a text message that was sent to him by the local cane society — the "Doiwala Society" — from where he had got "ganna parchi" to sell his crop. That parchi (or a paper receipt) had key details such as farmer's name, father's name, farmer code, village, parchi number, and code of cane society and mode of transport along with the variety of the crop.

"Instead of taking the hard copy of the parchi, I asked the farmer's code and verified that from the farmer's details that the cane society had sent to me on email. I registered the farmer's entry and the cane weight before allowing him to move ahead to unload the produce," said Sanjay Khatri, cane clerk at the sugar mill, who wears gloves these days while working on the computer and handling documents. He also has a sanitiser in his drawer.

The key difference from the past has been the lack of any physical interaction. During this entire process, for instance, there was no exchange of paper between the farmer and the mill staff.

Mill management had introduced certain changes to this effect as a measure to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

"While coming from fields to the mill, farmers would have touched many things and the exchange of papers with them makes the possibility of transmission of any kind of infection. Hence, in view of Covid-19 infection, it has been decided to minimise the exchange of papers with farmers. We take details of farmers and the parchi issued to them from the cane societies via email," said Pravin Kumar Pandey, Cane Manager and Public Information Officer of the mill.

The normal procedure that was effective till a few days ago; every farmer had to hand over that parchi to the cane clerk after entering the mill to get his supply weighed and get another receipt in return. That second receipt displays details like the weight of the sugarcane with the vehicle and bank account details in which cane price has to be transferred.

But now, a farmer neither submits a copy of the parchi nor does he get any receipt from the cane clerk. "I verbally tell the farmer the weight of his crop at the weighing machine. Farmers get the final receipt at the exit point after unloading the cart or trolley or truck and that final receipt displays details like the time of arrival, duration of weighing of the cane, the time of exit, the weight of the crop and amount to be paid to the farmer against his crop and bank account," Khatri said.

Pandey said that to prevent farmers crowding at the mill gate, they were providing tokens to farmers so that farmers come to mill only when it is their turn. He said that farmers are also informed about their turn over the phone. Also, mill management has asked the farmers to maintain a distance of minimum four-metre while parking their vehicles in a queue near the uploading point.

"That is helping us adhere to social distancing norms," Pandey said. Also, the mill management has stipulated that, in any 24-hour cycle, only a maximum of 65-trucks, 60 trolleys and 200 carts will be allowed inside the mill.

"Due to such measures, there is no crowd of farmers and no long queues of trolleys and carts at the entrance gate. Everyone enters on their turn. This is helpful in social distancing with respect to the spread of coronavirus," said Agraj Saini, a farmer.

Despite the crushing season, there are no queues outside the sugar mill. *Express*

THE BIG STORY

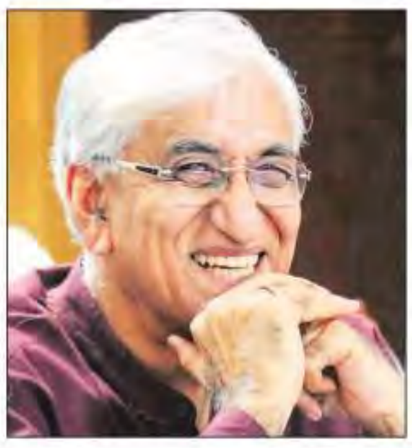
EXPLAINED

Why going digital matters

Typically, sugarcane farmers would transact with the mill officials using paper receipts. But this provided an easy way for Coronavirus to spread. The efforts of the Doiwala sugar mill to go digital in its transaction with farmers, and thus reducing the chances of infection, holds an important lesson for the rest of India.

'It is better for govts to err on the side of caution, test as many people as we can'

CHHATTISGARH'S HEALTH Minister and senior Congress leader T S Singh Deo spoke to GARGI VERMA on the preparedness of the state and the fight against Covid-19 as well as the central government's response to the crisis.



THE POLICY INTERVIEW

T S SINGH DEO
Health Minister, Chhattisgarh

How has Chhattisgarh as a state prepared for the Covid-19 crisis?

We have identified separate Covid-19 facilities; 100 beds in each district. We have identified and are preparing 4,600 beds across the state in government facilities. We have also kept 500 beds at the RIMS, a private institute, which is at the back burner; we will take it up after the government facilities are full, and after that, we would go to the other private hospitals. We have also created 13 verticals with senior IAS officers heading them with a designated team. We are looking at a state command centre, medical equipment and supplies, quarantine facility and home isolation, mobility support and logistics, media, control room, contact tracing, community surveillance, Covid-19 hospital management and treatment, volunteer doctors and staff, testing, training and HR management, coordinating. These verticals are for focused work, as per demand, we can have more, we can merge some teams and have less.

This is the platform from where we are building our preparations. From here, the decisions go down to the ground. This is our planning team and we monitor each vertical's position for each of our facilities. The 4,600 beds include 2,600 beds across districts, 200 beds in each medical college, 100 beds in Mana, 400 beds in Raipur medical college and 500 beds in AIIMS. The verticals are responsible for identifying what these facilities needs, how to procure them, and then how to provide them to the concerned places.

We had started the protocol wherein anyone who has come to the Raipur airport was given a questionnaire to fill about their travel history, irrespective of where they were coming from, whereas the national protocol suggested only people who have come from abroad had to be screened. We have also gotten details from the central government of whoever has travelled abroad from January 1.

Do you think the steps taken as of now to fight the pandemic in the state are enough?

We have been lucky so far, that our state has not had a single Covid-19 related death so far. But I genuinely feel that this cannot hold. More than 170 countries, most advance economies are on their knees. At such a time, it is not possible that the virus will leave us unaffected. We can't hope for such a thing, or we will slip up somewhere.

In India, we were at 58 fatalities, out of 2032 affected patients, which is about 2.5% mortality. Though our percentage is almost half the global figure, it should not give us ground to be lax in any manner.

What are the biggest challenges in terms of diagnosing and then containment?

The PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) kits and masks are in short supply for all states. It's not that the material is available in the market and we are not procuring it. We have placed orders with HLL and Mylab and have not gotten enough supplies for them. We have only 4,600 PPE kits as of now and around 1,800 testing kits, which are not enough.

The other challenge was the testing criteria. The protocol from ICMR was very limited. Even the testing centres were less, we have been telling the government to let us increase the testing centres. Right now I am groping in the dark. I believe it is better to test and find out that the people are negative instead of having positive especially asymptomatic carriers, spreading the infection. That's my biggest worry

Do you think the lack of equipment points to a bigger problem of being unprepared by the central government? How is the state of Chhattisgarh dealing with this?

The central government prepared in a limited manner. The protocol was built in a manner that the supplies were produced in the scale of limited testing and contained infection, and are now in short supply. Even though we have the infrastructure, the state government is paying for the kits, we should be allowed to test. Even the PPE kits, we are the ones paying for it. The government is just acting as a facilitator.

If you are being asked to test only a hundred people, you will have equipment for only 100 people. But we want to test a thousand people, but the supplies are not there. There's a shortage in PPE kits, according to my knowledge number of ventilators nationally is too low. We have over 600 ventilators in the state available for us. If there is an explosion of the infection, if things take a turn for the worse then all facilities will be limited. For quarantining large numbers, we will have to turn to schools and Ashramshalas, which we have asked the District Collectors to identify. We are trying to procure PPEs and testing kits privately as well, by reaching out to the international community and by listening to the international experts. I have also consulted health ministers of other states including Kerala, and we are in touch and exchange notes. Combined brainstorming is going on to look for viable alternate measures in the time of crisis.

Do you agree with the approach of the central government? Where do you think we lacked and what are the steps taken by the central government now which you believe are in the right direction?

The central government took a protocol that I have not been in agreement with. The teams of experts deciding the protocol went in for testing only affected person. However, I believe that we need wider testing. If there was no spike, then the GOI would have been completely correct in not wasting public money and they would have contained the pandemic. But if the situation has been misread then I believe we have made a mistake, then we should have been more prepared.

I believe seeing the international scenario, we should have erred on the side of caution. I hope it doesn't lead to a situation where mortality is high.

Managing a district in times of a crisis: No fixed work hours, no off days, and complete accountability

RAAKHI JAGGA
SANGRUR, APRIL 5

FOR GHANSHYAM Thori, the Deputy Commissioner of Sangrur, the day starts at 5 am and never ends before 1 am. There are no fixed hours and no off days. "In times of Covid-19 management, you not only have to maintain supply chains, listen to the grievances but also maintain safety standards. Over 4,000 staff members work on rotation in the entire district — spreading awareness and ensuring supply chains work smoothly at various levels," Thori.

In order to ensure that people stay inside their homes, Thori has introduced a total of 2,500 helpline numbers for door-to-door delivery. Out of the total, 1800 numbers work in 599 panchayats while the remaining numbers are for urban wards to supply ration and medicine.

Above all, people need to be motivated and are told about the importance of working from home (WFH). Thori has explained to his staff what is WFH and even given some material on it. "It is a new concept and hence they need to know, be available for calls and texts and above all, not move out else they'll defeat the very purpose of WFH," said Thori. The department heads have been told by the DC to keep interacting with their staff and ask whether they are staying home, and not meeting people, and also inquire about their health.

On a daily basis, the DC meets over 150 persons for various works — ranging from his core team to Kirana vendors and chemist association representatives. In between, he has to visit slums to distribute ration and to make sure things are running smoothly elsewhere in the jurisdiction. For instance, many times in the morning, Thori has to make the rounds of the local sabzi mandis to check whether the wholesalers are giving vegetables to retailers at reasonable prices or not.

The DC's wife, Dr Gagan Kundra, who is an IRS officer and is posted in the same district as Deputy Commissioner Income tax, is a medical doctor by training. Dr Kundra has volunteered to work for Covid-19 management plan. "It is a time to work as a doctor, though I have timelines for my Income Tax work as well. But at this juncture, I want to be part of medicos to serve the patients. I am available if the need arises," said Dr Kundra.

As of now, the door-to-door supply of ration is going on via Zomato while other private vendors also distribute. Chemists are also supplying medicines, but despite that complaints do come. Till now 528 complaints have been registered on helpline numbers; these are being addressed by the concerned departments.

Ghanshyam Thori , Deputy Commissioner of Sangrur, outside civil hospital. *Express*

ON THE FRONTLINES

After the end: What drives health workers who take care of the dead

SANJANA BHALERAO
MUMBAI, APRIL 5

THE CORONA FIGHTERS
AN EXPRESS SERIES

THE MORNING of March 17, Kasturba Hospital — then the only centre to test and treat Covid-19 patients, witnessed an eerie silence. Mumbai saw it's first Covid-19 related death; a 63-year-old man who had travelled to Dubai. The death spooked everyone in the ward, except perhaps Rajeev (name changed on request), the ward boy.

A senior approached Rajeev and gave him the task to prepare the dead body and move it to the mortuary from the isolation ward. Without hesitation, he prepared for the task. Having dealt with dead patients' bodies that pose a high risk of infection in 2015 during the Swine-flu outbreak in the country, he knew the precautions he had to take.

Rajeev first wore gloves, masks, eye-wear and a bodysuit. He then, along with a staff member, wrapped the senior citizen's body in a leak-proof plastic bag, zipped till the neck, and moved it to the freezer. Rajeev, who is in his 30s said, "I am not scared at all. I take all precautions and safety measures. We did not wrap the body in the plastic bag until a family member had seen it. Because once it is zipped and moved to the mortuary freezer, it cannot be opened, the risk of infection then is high".

It was only after he transported the body to a biohazard-proof vehicle for electric cremation at Shivaji Park that he understood the scale of the work he had completed. His six-hour-long single shift was stretched to 24 hours and he was still not home. "I was tired that day. But the first thing I did after reaching home was to bathe again, eat well and get some sleep. The crucial thing I learnt about doing this work was to eat and sleep well. Many depend on alcohol to work in a mortuary, but I am against that. If I am not well-rested and fed, my chances of catching the infection are triple-fold," explains Rajeev, who lives nearest to the hospital than his colleagues and is motivated by his wife to continue working and not skip his duty.

Before the body was taken to Shivaji Park crematorium, six relatives spent the entire morning in the hospital trying to figure out how to go about the cremation of a coronavirus-infected body, and whether it would be allowed by civic authorities. A similar question troubled, Dr Virendra Mohite, Medical officer of Health (MOH) who was given the task to monitor the cremation. After arranging the personal protective equipment for the crematorium workers, Mohite headed out to meet them. "Shifting the Covid-19 positive patient and preparing for his cremation five days later were the most challenging tasks for the team. Until then the staff had been involved in the awareness campaign".

The body went straight from the ambulance to the incinerator. After the electric cremation, the staff — a team of five, burned their protective equipment, soaked their uniforms, and bathed. The crematorium did not accept any other bodies for cremation and barred any entry into the premises for a few hours.

So far, Mumbai has registered, eight confirmed coronavirus death. Out of the eight, three were buried at the cemetery. World Health Organisation (WHO) and AIIMS advise cremation — unless a family insists on burial for religious reasons — a request Mumbai civic body had not prepared for. As per the ministry's advise, families are asked not to crowd the burial ground for paying condolences, not to hug, wash, or kiss the body. The first burial in the city was of a 68-year old Philippines national in the eastern suburb of Mumbai on March 24. As none of the family members could be present for the burial, the authorities had provided assistance. Following the concerns expressed by the community leader over the contamination, as most burial grounds are in densely populated localities, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) issued a circular emphasising on the cremation of the bodies. However, an exception will be made if the burial ground is large enough to not create the possibility of spread of infection in the neighbouring areas. However, the exception created a hassle in the burial of a senior citizen, who was suspected of Covid 19, the same day.

The Mumbai police following the earlier order, which had prohibited burial of bodies of all those who die of the Coronavirus infection, within the Mumbai jurisdiction, had refused to release the body of the senior citizen. The body was released after an intervention by Samajwadi Party MLA Rais Shaikh, who said that the mandatory bathing of the body was to be skipped. With Mumbai police recording the entire procedure, the body was lowered into the grave with a rope following which the grave was covered with earth.

BMC's health team sanitising the apartment of a Covid-19 patient. *Express*

'Next week will be our Pearl Habour'

Nearly 8,500 deaths, 310,000 cases in US; Top expert says virus may assume 'a seasonal nature'

AGENCIES
NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, APR 5

TWO OF the Trump administration's top health officials issued grave warnings to the American public Sunday, saying the next week — when the outbreak is expected to reach its peak in places like New York — will be "our Pearl Harbour."

"The next week is going to be our Pearl Harbour moment," said the United States surgeon general, Dr Jerome M Adams, on the news show "Meet the Press." "It's going to be our 9/11 moment. It's going to be the hardest moment for many Americans in their entire lives."

Almost 8,500 of the US's reported 310,000 coronavirus patients have died, and governors are hunting for scarce ventilators.

Adams' dire warnings were echoed by Dr Anthony S Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, who urged Americans to "buckle down" on the news show "Face the Nation."

"This is going to be a bad week," he said, adding later: "It is going to be shocking to some, it certainly is really disturbing to see that, but that's what's going to happen before it turns around."

Healthcare workers wheel the bodies of deceased people from a hospital. *Reuters*

US President Trump had on Saturday predicted a surging death toll in what he said may be "the toughest week" of the pandemic. "There will be a lot of death," he said at the White House

While Dr Fauci said the mitigation strategies around the country appeared to be having an effect, he pushed back against a suggestion that the outbreak is under control. "I'm not saying we have it under control," he said. "That would be a false statement. We are struggling to get it under control."

He added that because of the delay in the onset of the illness, even if the number of new cases begins to flatten, "the deaths will be about one to two weeks more."

Fauci says there is a very good chance the new coronavirus "will assume a seasonal nature" because it is unlikely to be under control globally. He says the virus is unlikely to be completely eradicated from the planet this year. That means the US could see the "beginning of a resurgence" during the next flu season.

Fauci says the prospect of a resurgence is the reason the US is working so hard to get its preparedness "better than it was." He says that includes working to develop a vaccine and conducting clinical trials on therapeutic interventions.

EXPLAINED

Tussle with states grows

EVEN AS the US heads into its "hardest" week, the tension between the federal government and some of the hardest-hit states has become a key concern. Governors are criticising the Trump administration for not doing enough to prepare for the outbreak in January and February, before the virus began its exponential spread in the US. This, they say, would at least have ensured availability of key equipment.

Pakistan: 300 Tablighi members test positive

M ZULQERNAIN
LAHORE, APRIL 5

OVER 300 Tablighi Jamaat members have been tested coronavirus positive till Sunday in Pakistan's Punjab province, amid efforts by authorities to track down and quarantine thousands of people who attended a massive congregation of the Islamic group last month.

Authorities have placed the entire city of Raiwind that houses headquarters of the Pakistani faction of the Jamaat under quarantine and completely restricted the mobility of people within or outside the city.

According to the data released by the primary and secondary health care corona monitoring room on Sunday, over 300 preachers of the Tablighi Jamaat at quarantine centres in different parts of Punjab province have so far been tested positive for COVID-19. Most of them belong to Lahore's Tablighi Jamaat Markaz that has been turned into quarantine centre.

The other centres where Tablighi preachers have been kept include Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Nankana Sahib, Sargodha, Vehari, Faisalabad, Kalashah Kaku and Rahim Yar Khan districts of Punjab. A large number of preachers who are suspected to be COVID-19 carrier are also being kept in these quarantine centres.

A large number of preachers who had attended a major congregation in early March in its headquarters in Lahore were later tracked down across the country and placed in quarantine centres. Some 50 members of the Jamaat, including five Nigerian women, suspected to be carriers of coronavirus, are admitted to a quarantine centre in Kasur, some 50 kms from Lahore.

According to the government, in March the Tablighi Jamaat went ahead with its annual congregation in Raiwind, Lahore against its 'advice' that the gathering might spread the virus. **PTI**

Cases in Pakistan have risen to 2,900. *Reuters/Representational*

S AFRICAN CLERIC DIES AFTER GOING TO NIZAMUDDIN CONGREGATION

Johannesburg: An 80-year-old South African Muslim cleric, who recently returned from India after attending the Nizamuddin congregation, has died after contracting the novel coronavirus, according to his family members.

Moulana Yusuf Tootla attended the March 1-15 Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Nizamuddin. Tootla, who died on Tuesday, was buried after his body was collected in a bag by the Islamic Burial Council (IBC). Tootla was reportedly advised not to travel to India for the gathering, but he was adamant to go.

"He (Tootla) said his fate is in Allah's hands, as He (God) had already decided when he would recall him," a family member on the basis of anonymity said. **PTI**

NY tops 4,000 deaths, but sees dip in toll

NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK, APRIL 5

NEW YORK State has now topped 4,000 deaths from the virus, Governor Andrew M Cuomo said Sunday. But the governor pointed to early indications that the crisis could be plateauing, though he cautioned against jumping to any conclusions.

The number of deaths in the state has reached 4,159, Cuomo said. But, notably, there were slightly fewer fatalities on Saturday than on Friday. In addition, the number of new hospitalisations on Saturday was significantly lower than in previous days.

"You could argue that you're seeing a slight plateauing in the data, which obviously would be good news," Cuomo said at his daily briefing in Albany. But he noted that it was too soon to say whether the changes in the numbers were indicative of a trend.

Cuomo also said he would seek to shift patients from overloaded hospitals to other facilities with lighter workloads and more equipment.

"I can't say to a hospital I will send you all the supplies you need, all the vents you need," he said. "We don't have them. You are going to have to shift and deploy to different locations based on the need of that location."

Responding to concerns from residents in other parts of the state who were concerned that they would be left vulnerable if the state redeployed ventilators and other equipment away from their area. "I don't see any other operational model," he said. "You cannot handle this without your brothers and sister."

So far, the governor said, the state has not redeployed any ventilators or equipment.

CHINA DONATES 1,000 VENTILATORS

- China donated 1,000 ventilators to New York as authorities grappled with an insufficient supply of the life saving equipment
- Governor Andrew Cuomo on Saturday said New York had ordered 17,000 ventilators from the federal government
- "China is remarkably the repository for all of these orders. Ventilators, PPE, it all goes back to China..." he said
- "The Chinese govt is going to facilitate a donation of 1,000 ventilators" that came in to JFK Airport, he added

Biden considers virtual convention

New York: Former Vice President Joe Biden, the front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination, said on Sunday the party may be forced to host a "virtual" nominating convention in August.

The Democratic Party already postponed its convention from July to August last week, citing worries over the outbreak that has prompted a majority of US states to order their residents to stay at home.

"We may have to do a virtual convention," Biden said on ABC's "This Week" program. "I think we should be thinking about that right now ... We may not be able to put 10, 20, 30,000 people in one place." **REUTERS**

UK govt warns of tougher measures on social distancing

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON, APRIL 5

BRITAIN'S HEALTH Secretary Matt Hancock on Sunday warned the government could ban outside exercise if people flout stringent guidelines to cut the spread of coronavirus.

Warmer weekend weather has stoked fears that Britons could congregate in parks and open spaces, potentially increasing transmission, as the country goes into a third week of lockdown.

Hancock, who himself tested positive for COVID-19, told Sky News television sunbathing was "against the rules" and anyone doing so put lives at risk.

He later told the BBC most people were following guidance only to leave their homes to shop for essential supplies and medicine, and to exercise once a day.

But he said it was "quite unbelievable" that a minority were not. "The truth is the more people go out from home, the more the virus spreads," he added.

"I don't want to have to take away exercise as a reason to leave home because people are not following the rules...

"If the result of that is that too many people go out and flout the rules I'm afraid we'll have to take action." Meanwhile, police in Dorset said they charged a man with a public order offence for allegedly wiping his saliva on items in a supermarket.

Hancock's warning came after another record day-on-day rise in reported deaths from COVID-19 that took the overall toll in Britain to 4,313, and confirmed hospital cases to 41,903.

The death toll includes a five-year-old child, as well as seven healthcare workers.

STAND-IN SERVICE

A priest holds mass with photos of believers after the service was closed in Achern, Germany, on Sunday. *Reuters*

Italy records lowest toll in over 2 weeks

REUTERS
MILAN, APRIL 5

ITALY REPORTED its lowest daily COVID-19 death toll for more than two weeks on Sunday as authorities began to look ahead to a second phase of the battle against the new coronavirus once the lockdown imposed almost a month ago is eventually eased.

The toll from the world's deadliest outbreak reached 15,887, almost a quarter of the global death total, but the rise of 525 from a day earlier was the smallest daily increase since March 19. "The curve has reached a plateau and begun to descend," said Silvio Brusaferro, head of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Italy's top health institute. "It is a result that we have to achieve day after day."

"If this is confirmed, we need to start thinking about the second phase and keep down the spread of this disease."

PANDEMIC WATCH

At the airport in Kathmandu. *AP*

NEPAL

780 foreigners evacuated

Kathmandu: Around 780 foreign tourists, mostly from European countries, stranded in Nepal due to the pandemic, have been evacuated in special flights, as the government intensified its lockdown. The foreigners were evacuated in four different chartered flights arranged by different countries and their diplomatic missions in Nepal, according to officials. The embassies of Germany, the US, Australia, France and other countries had reached out to the Nepal government for permission to evacuate their citizens from Nepal where a lockdown has been imposed by the government to fight the virus.

SINGAPORE

10 of 72 Indian COVID-19 patients recover

Singapore: Ten of the 72 Indian nationals infected with the coronavirus in Singapore have recovered and the rest are mostly stable, India's High Commissioner Jawed Ashraf said Sunday. Over 700 Indian nationals, including over 70 tourists and students, are stranded in the nation due to non-availability of flights. They are being helped by the high commission with their visa extension and where requested with food and accommodation. The high commissioner has assured the Indian workers the Singapore Government will look after them.

GREECE

Case detected in second migrant camp

Athens: Officials in Greece on Sunday placed a second migrant camp near Athens under lockdown after an Afghan resident tested positive for the coronavirus, the migration ministry said. Officials said the camp in Malakasa, some 38 kilometres (24 miles) northeast of Athens, had been placed under "full sanitary lockdown" for 14 days, with no one allowed to enter or leave. The ministry said the 53-year-old Afghan man, who has a prior ailment, had personally sought help with virus symptoms at the in-camp medical facility.

AUSTRALIA

Toll stands at 34; total cases cross 5,500

Melbourne: Australia's coronavirus death toll stood at 34 on Sunday with 5,687 virus positive cases, officials said. Health officials from New South Wales confirmed that there were 2,580 total infections now in the state and four people, including three passengers from Ruby Princess Cruise Ship, died on Saturday night. During a virus update, NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard said, "This is a very dangerous virus and it is still marching through our community. It has killed, at this stage in NSW, 16 people."

THE WIDELY-VIEWED VIDEO UNDERSCORED DANGERS BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS FACE

Days after fuming about coughing passenger, bus driver dies

MICHAEL LEVENSON
NEW YORK, APRIL 5

JASON HARGROVE was furious.

A woman on his bus had just coughed four or five times, unguarded. He went on Facebook and vented his anger, cursing at times. In a video posted on March 21, he railed against the disrespect that he said passengers like her had shown workers like him who were trying to make Detroit run in the midst of a pandemic.

"We're out here as public workers, doing our job, trying to make an honest living to take care of our families," he said. "But for you to get on the bus, and stand on the bus, and cough several times without covering up your mouth, and you know that we're in the middle of a pandemic, that lets me know that some folks don't care."

On Wednesday, a week and a half after recording the video outside his bus, Hargrove, a 50-year-old, married father of six, died from complications of Covid-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, according to his union and city officials.

Hargrove's video has since been viewed more than half a million times, and has resonated as a reminder of the dangers that transit employees and other blue-collar workers face as they suddenly find themselves on the front lines of the coronavirus.

Jason Hargrove said he felt violated both for himself and for other passengers who were on the bus. *NYT*

"He knew his life was being put in jeopardy — even though he was going to work for the citizens of Detroit every day — by somebody who just didn't care, somebody who didn't take this seriously," Mayor Mike Duggan told reporters on Thursday. "And now he's gone."

Mayor Duggan said he thought of Hargrove and other workers who put themselves at risk whenever he saw people violating social distancing rules.

"You're putting really good people like Jason Hargrove's lives on the line," he said. "I hope the people in this city and in this country will watch his video and listen to his words, because it's a message this country needs to hear."

But even before his death, Detroit's bus drivers had complained that the city was not doing enough to protect them, said Glenn Tolbert, the president of the local transit workers' union, who himself tested positive for the coronavirus on Thursday. Tolbert said on Saturday that 200 of the union's 525 members were in quarantine.

On March 17, Detroit's bus drivers refused to go to work until the city acted. The same day, Mayor Duggan announced several changes to protect the drivers, including waiving fares; requiring passengers to use only the rear doors; and making sure drivers had gloves, masks and disinfecting wipes.

The city also stepped up the cleaning and sanitising of buses, according to John Roach, a city spokesman.

In his video, Hargrove said the woman who coughed on his bus without covering her mouth showed that some people were not taking the virus seriously.

"It's folks dying out here," he said, adding that he felt violated both for himself and for other passengers who were on the bus.

"He was frustrated, but he was a professional guy to the end," Tolbert said.

"I just don't want his death to be in vain," he added. "I want us to get through this thing, and I want the transit operators around the world to be recognised as first responders and given the necessary equipment." **NYT**

MARKET WATCH

FPIs PULL OUT RECORD ₹1.1L CR IN MAR

New Delhi: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have net withdrawn a record Rs 1.1 lakh crore from the Indian markets in March as the coronavirus pandemic dented investor sentiment worldwide, according to latest depositories data. **PTI**

TO HAVE TEAMS FOR META-DATA & AI ANALYSIS, PRO-ACTIVE RISK ASSESSMENT CELL

Reserve Bank setting up exclusive wing for banking fraud oversight

AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) is in the process of putting together an exclusive wing for banking fraud oversight, which will have teams for meta-data processing and analysis, artificial intelligence analysis units, as well as pro-active risk assessment cell, sources close to the development said.

The banking regulator is also planning to bring in experts from the private sector working in all these domains to train the new members in the fraud oversight wing. These training sessions are will be repeated every year in the initial years, the sources said.

The new team is likely to be formed as soon as within the next month, and could have a capacity of up to 600 officers, the sources said, adding that the perception of the RBI's inaction in the Yes Bank case had sped up the process.

"There was one RBI director on the Yes Bank board, who had the help of three mid-level executives. They had never done credit risk assessment task in their career so far, so it was difficult for them to flag what was happening," a source said, requesting anonymity.

The RBI, on March 5, superseded the board of Yes Bank and placed it under immediate moratorium. Withdrawals from the bank were also capped at Rs 50,000. The banking regulator had then appointed former State Bank of India Chief Financial Officer Prashant Kumar as the bank's administrator.

A day later, the RBI revealed a reconstruction plan for the private sector lender, which had then suggested a possibility of SBI, India's largest bank, acquiring a 49 per cent equity stake. SBI later committed to invest up to Rs 7,250 crore in the beleaguered private sector lender.

After the loan fiasco at Punjab National Bank, the RBI had been mulling ways to proactively detect such frauds.

As part of that plan, the banking regulator had late last year moved to create a separate cadre of its own employees who would work in regulation and oversight sections.

There were some initial teething troubles due to which the section could never get to actual ground work, sources said.

Apart from the new division, the banking regulator is also likely to move swiftly to fill its vacancies, as it faces a shortage of staff.

"We found that in divisions or for work where we should have 20 people working on a case, there were only 7-8. Naturally they will be overworked all the time and the bank will face human resource management issues," another official said.

EXPLAINED

Veterans to guide teams; training in latest technologies

THE IDEA of a fraud oversight wing was floated in October 2019 by the top management of RBI. The working conditions, however, were very strict and anyone opting for that cadre would not be allowed to leave for three years.

To overcome the problem, the RBI sought to create an entire new wing and hire fresh people, including industry veterans who would lead the teams. These new teams will also be given training in the latest technologies, so that they can also prevent another Yes Bank kind of event.

INTERVIEW WITH METRO CASH & CARRY INDIA MD & CEO

'Expect shortage of some essentials; seeing decline in footfalls of kirana customers'

THE EFFECTS of disruption in transportation and the labour force on account of the lockdown has been felt across the country's entire retail supply chain. This includes the wholesale distribution system that is not only reporting a hit in inflow of certain essential goods but also with retailers not turning up to restock their own supplies. MD & CEO of one of India's largest B2B sellers, METRO Cash & Carry India, ARVIND MEDIRATTA, told PRANAV MUKUL in an interaction that the company, with 27 wholesale stores across India, was also learning from its sister stores in Europe and Germany about consumption and buying patterns across various stages of COVID-19 to stock its supplies accordingly. Edited excerpts:

Arvind Mediratta, METRO Cash & Carry India MD & CEO

Is METRO facing any supply chain-related issues towards receiving stocks caused by trucks being stranded across state borders?

Yes, a lot of trucks are stuck in inter-state borders carrying essential items, along with non-essential items in the same vehicle. Otherwise, exclusive essential items trucks are on the move. In some cases, police is stopping the vehicles at the borders and, in some places, the drivers are not reporting on duty due to the scare of the outbreak. Due to these problems we are facing issues in receiving stocks from our supplier partners.

Also, initially we had issues delivering essential supplies to our kirana customers as there was lack of implementation of advisories from central government at the state level across all states. With regular conversations with relevant authorities and timely intervention from the central government, these issues are being ironed out.

Is the company facing any issues due to shortage of labour at its warehouses, stores or within its transport chain?

For the past two days, we are facing some issues to get labours into warehouses of Bengaluru, where attendance is around 50 per cent. Compared to other warehouses in the vicinity, this attendance is good but we are working with our third-party partners to improve the attendance. Since most of the warehouse labour is local, local issues like decisions taken by surrounding villages to close village entries for movement of people, propaganda of new infections reported in nearby towns push the labour back to homes.

There is no issue with transport within METRO supply chain network. All our vehicles, people have secured required permissions to work. Our vehicles are plying from warehouses to stores. The big challenge is in getting trucks from suppliers as there is a huge scarcity of trucks in the market.

Over the last week, we have been struggling with an average attendance of 30-40 per cent at the stores. Given we are in the essential services business, this is well below sub-optimal and there is immense pressure on store staff to manage the inflow of customer. With local transport unavailability during the lockdown, most employees at shop floor level are reliant on public transport and do not have their own vehicles to commute.

Of our total staff strength, 25 per cent is female, who are unable to commute under these circumstances. Furthermore, public transport is not accessible and therefore people who left for their hometown are not able to join back despite their willingness to do so. Across most locations, the police is not accepting company ID cards or company letters granting permission.

In addition to these issues, there are other societal and family pressures that the staff is facing. The staff is highly dependent on local food vendors/hawkers/dhabas post-store working hours. With the current lockdown, these vendors are unavailable and there are no food options present. The company cafeteria and other employees are trying to provide support in this regard. The employees are also facing family and community pressure. Local landlords and locality are not supportive of staff working with essential services.

We have made provisions to ensure our staff is well protected and taken care of. Upon the government's orders, passes have been given to our staff, so that they are not stopped or harassed by local police authorities.

Has the company faced any supply hit from particular brands for FMCG goods?

We have stock of all the essential food items — rice, dal, atta stock at our stores for next 2 weeks. Having a global presence has given us several learnings. We have been having regular e-meetings with our headquarters in Germany and other European countries where we have operations to understand the consumption and buying patterns in different stages of COVID-19.

As far as food items are concerned, we will eventually witness shortage in pulses and whole spices as these items are largely transported from states like Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, as these states were restricting movement of goods earlier. The demand for packaged food products like biscuits and noodles is likely to see a spike but since the production has been hit, there will be a shortage.

For FMCG companies, production units have stopped, there is manpower challenge, coupled with transportation issues.

Furthermore, interpretation of the advisories at the state level is a major problem which is impacting the production for most companies, thereby resulting in the disruption of the entire supply chain. Depot operations of many FMCG companies were constrained severely last week. It is improving gradually. As of now only about 40 per cent of FMCG essential supplies are running smooth, others hit with labour and transport issues. Only about 80-85 per cent of FMCG essential business warehouses are operational now. Major FMCG brands with supply constraints are HUL, ITC, Nestle, Britannia, etc.

Over the last one week, has there been any significant change in the company's customers turning up to replenish their own stocks?

There is an irregularity in store footfall as a result of several reasons. Initially the footfall increased as customers felt our stores may not stay open and stocks could become an issue. However, in the past one week or so there has been a significant drop as customers are scared to come out of their homes or in some cases they are not even allowed to come out. In some cities, they are not being issued passes which would allow them to buy essential commodities and food items.

There is also a fear of getting harassed by the cops. Footfalls have also dropped because of disruption in store operations. Some stores are allowed to stay open only until noon while some stores are allowed to operate for limited hours. For our stores in Surat, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Lucknow and Meerut, we are only given permission to do home deliveries.

Geographically, METRO stores in which states are the most affected in terms of supply shortage arising from disruption of transport systems?

Our stores located in Nashik, Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Indore & Ahmedabad have seen disruption due to transport unavailability. However, we are working with our transport partners, picking stocks from FMCG company depots and factories to mitigate the crisis of transport. Our stores had a shortage of pulses and whole spices as the movement of trucks was restricted in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan. There was no shortage in the supply of Atta and Oil.

As rice is produced locally in most states, the restriction did not impact the supply, likewise the case with wheat and flour. We also increased the availability of our own brands at stores to cater to the demand.

Disruption also occurred due to sudden increase of freight and transportation costs by transporters and caused the shortage of trucks. The government so far has not reduced the costs of diesel/fuel.

BRIEFLY

HDFC Bank to collect virus fund donations

Mumbai: HDFC Bank has received the mandate to collect donations for the PM-CARES Fund. **ENS**

EPFO to accept Aadhaar as birth proof online

New Delhi: EPFO will accept online subscribers' Aadhaar card as valid proof to rectify their date of birth to ensure the account is KYC compliant, Labour Ministry has said.

GST officers process over 10K registrations

New Delhi: GST Network said taxmen have processed over 10,000 new registrations and about 8,000 refund applications in the first 10 days of the lockdown, working through Virtual Private Network.

Air Deccan ceases its operations

New Delhi: Air Deccan announced Sunday it is ceasing operations until further notice and employees are being put on sabbatical without pay, CEO Arun Kumar Singh said in an e-mail to the staff.

Macro scene bleak, warns Jean Dreze

New Delhi: The Indian macroeconomic situation is bleak and all set to get worse if local or national lockdowns continue for some more time, economist Jean Dreze has said. **PTI**

Centre allows new lessees to mine for 2 years before getting fresh clearances

JAY MAZOOMDAAR
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

AIMED AT ensuring ease of doing business and continuity in the supply of minerals to industries, the Environment Ministry has held that the successful bidder of a mining lease "shall be deemed to have acquired valid prior environmental clearance vested with the previous lessee for a period of two years" — provided the new lessee "shall apply and obtain prior environmental clearance" within that period.

The Ministry's move, in an order issued on March 28, was necessitated by the need to align government policies after the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, was amended in January 2020 to include provisions for transfer of statutory clearances.

The Supreme Court, on February 7, 2018, directed successful bidders to obtain fresh environmental clearances while hearing the Goa Foundation versus Sesa Sterlite Limited matter. Accordingly, the Environment Ministry, on November 29, 2019, notified that new lessees would have to obtain fresh clearances through "an expeditious mechanism."

It took the Ministry four months to modify its position and allow a two-year window for continuity. The March 28 notification also clarified that "transportation of already mined out material lying within the mining leases... by the previous lessee, after the expiry of the said lease, shall not form the part of the mining capacity so permitted to the successful bidder."

'NEED TO ALIGN GOVT POLICIES'

The Environment Ministry 's move, in an order issued on March 28, was necessitated by the need to align government policies after the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, was amended in January 2020 to include provisions for transfer of statutory clearances

Lockdown to have deeper impact, 52% foresee job losses, as per CII CEOs Snap Poll

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

THE CORONAVIRUS outbreak and the subsequent countrywide lockdown has deeply impacted India's economy, with a majority of the firms expecting a significant decline in revenues, falling demand and job losses, according to a CII CEOs Snap Poll.

The online survey saw a cross-country participation of around 200 CEOs across sectors.

Most firms (80 per cent) claimed that their inventory was lying idle at present.

Life insurance policyholders get 30 days more to pay premium

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

IRDAI HAS provided an additional 30-day grace period for policyholders to pay premium on life insurance policies, whose renewal date fall in March and April amid the lockdown to fight against coronavirus pandemic.

Insurance Regulatory and Developement Authority of India (Irdai) has already provided additional time for payment of renewal premium in case of health insurance policies and motor third party insurance.

The insurers and the council had flagged operational constraints and difficulties being faced by policyholders due to the nationwide three-week lockdown and social distancing advisory.

Housing sales may fall 35% in 2020: Anarock

India's residential real estate has been severely hit by the nationwide lockdown and sales could fall by up to 35 per cent across seven major cities during the 2020 calendar year following the outbreak of COVID-19, as per Anarock

EXISTING PROBLEMS
- # Subdued demand
- # Liquidity crisis

OUTLOOK
- With a screeching halt to site visits, discussions, documentation and closures, the early indicators depict that the sector will likely face a tough time for the next few quarters and recovery will be pushed further away by at least a couple of years

BASE CASE
- Sales could drop 25 per cent to 1.96 lakh units this year from 2.61 lakh units in 2019 across seven major cities — Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Pune and Hyderabad

DOWNSIDE CASE
- Housing sales might drop by 35 per cent to 1.7 lakh units this year

FRESH SUPPLY of homes is likely to register an annual decline of 25-30 per cent this year from nearly 2.37 lakh units in 2019

COMMERCIAL REAL estate is not immune to the COVID-19 fallout

CORPORATE OCCUPIERS are seen delaying their leasing decisions and several businesses are testing the work-from-home option

Source: Anarock/PTI

30%: ***While net office space leasing could fall by up to 30 per cent to 28 million sq ft this year from 40 million sq ft in 2019, the absorption of retail area might drop 64 per cent to 3.1 million sq ft from 8.5 million sq ft***

From deficit to excess: Dairies grapple with surplus milk during lockdown

HARISH DAMODARAN & PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS
NEW DELHI/PUNE, APRIL 5

TILL THE lockdown happened, Dodla Dairy Ltd was selling around 13.5 lakh litres per day (LLPD) of pouch liquid milk, curd and butter milk, while planning to step it up to 15 LLPD in the peak April-June summer consumption period.

The Hyderabad-based firm, however, was struggling with its average milk procurement at only 9 LLPD. To meet the gap, it was sourcing 2-2.5 LLPD from other private and cooperative dairies, apart from buying skimmed milk powder (SMP) and ghee/white butter for reconstitution.

But, during the lockdown, the equation has completely changed: Dodla Dairy's sales are today down to just 8.5 LLPD, below even its procurement of 9 LLPD. "Till 15 days ago, we were paying Rs 330-340 per kg for SMP. Those rates have now dropped to Rs 220-230, but we no longer need any third-party milk, SMP or fat. Coronavirus has helped restore balance and what our own farmers are supplying is more than enough to take care of demand," says D Sunil Reddy, managing director of the company, which recorded Rs 169 crore in sales in 2018-19.

A shop selling milk, during the lockdown, in Mathura. *PTI file*

Reddy attributes 60 per cent of the 5 LLPD fall in his sales to the closure of the HORECA (hotels, restaurants and catering) businesses. The balance 40 per cent is on account of reduced purchases, including by migrant labourers in cities such as Bengaluru who have gone back to their villages.

This is not unique to one dairy. The Kolhapur District Cooperative Milk Producers Union, which markets pouch milk under the Gokul brand, was — prior to the lockdown — selling 11-11.5 LLPD and procuring just about the same quantity. Today, it is able to hardly sell 8-8.5 LLPD. The Pune District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union's procurement of 2.3 LLPD, too, barely matched its sales of 'Katraj' brand liquid milk until 10-12 days ago. Its sales have now dipped to slightly over one LLPD. From not having any surplus milk for other products — SMP, ghee, ice-cream or shrikhand — both dairies are grappling with excess supplies. Gokul dairy, on Thursday, was forced to reduce its procurement price paid to farmers from Rs 31 to Rs 29 for milk containing 3.5 per cent fat and 8.5 per cent SNF (solids-not-fat).

"It's not only HORECA demand that has collapsed. There are also no marriages and other functions taking place, with collages and even hostels of coaching centres such as Narayana and Sri Chaitanya shutting down. February to May is generally when sales of curd, flavoured milk and other products to these institutional segments shoots up. This time, it is different and nobody other than households are buying," explains E Nageswara Rao, managing director of Vallhabha Milk Products Pvt Ltd.

Until at least mid-March, there was talk of India's milk output falling for the first time in 2019-20 and domestic dairies having little stocks of SMP and fat to tide over demand during the summer, when production by animals also tends to fall. It was being projected that the country would have to even import up to 1 lakh tonne of SMP. But the coronavirus pandemic and the lockdown have led to prices of white butter (82 per cent fat content) crashing from Rs 290-310 per kg to Rs 250-260 per kg. "Even at these rates, no movement or purchase is happening," points out R Rajasekaran, managing director of AR Dairy Food Pvt. Ltd, which has a 1.5 LLPD liquid milk plant at Dindigul, Tamil Nadu. His firm, like many small- and midsized dairies, supplies 50 per cent or more of its milk to hotels and tea shops. That market has practically vanished.

With many private dairies, ice-cream companies and even khoa/chenna makers supplying to sweetmeat sellers slashing or discontinuing procurement, the excess milk is flowing to cooperatives. Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation has seen its procurement jump almost 15 per cent to 255-260 LLPD, from 225-230 LLPD at this time last year. "We are hiring 3-4 outside plants for converting the surplus milk to powder. We normally do this (job-work conversion) during the flush winter months, but never in April," admits R.S. Sodhi, managing director of India's largest dairy concern better known as Amul.

Karnataka Milk Federation (Nandini) is at present collecting some 7 LLPD of extra milk, which the BS Yediyurappa-led government has decided to use for distributing free to the poor residents of urban slums across the state till April 14. The Maharashtra government, too, has started procuring up to 10 LLPD of surplus milk at Rs 25/litre for converting into SMP and fat. The scheme, to be operational for four months from April, is expected to cost Rs 400 crore.

"With prices falling and nobody to take their milk, many farmers have stopped giving compound cattle feed to their cows. They are afraid of increasing production and so just feeding them straw," notes Pradeep G Pai, managing director of Srikrishna Milks Pvt Ltd at Uttara Kannada in Karnataka.

Tighter export ban norms for anti-malarial drug

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 5

THE GOVERNMENT has tightened the export ban norms on anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine by including special economic zones (SEZs) under its prohibition ambit to ensure there is no shortfall during COVID-19 crisis.

The drug is not allowed to be shipped by export oriented units (EOUs) or under any export promotion scheme. "The export of hydroxycloroquine and formulations made from hydroxycloroquine...is no longer allowed from SEZs/EOUs or against Advance Authorisation or against full advance payment," the DGFT said. Normally export ban or restrictions imposed by the government does not apply on these zones as well as EOUs.

COPING UP

Creators of *The Gruffalo* book series, Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, have reimagined some of their characters in the light of the global pandemic, creating images to show how they are coping with home-schooling and isolation.

Helen Murray

(Clockwise from left) A scene from *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; The Show Must Go Online; Robin Thompson's *Romeo and Juliet*; *Hamlet* by Shakespeare's Globe

As You Like It

With some of the world's top arts centres offering their plays online, your laptop has become the ticket to a great show

DIPANITA NATH

SOCIAL MEDIA has discovered that William Shakespeare penned *King Lear* in quarantine during the plague. According to one meme, the greatest of British playwrights could do so only because YouTube wasn't streaming in the 1600s. Records show that *King Lear* premiered during the Christmas festivities at the court of King James I in 1606, a few months after the bubonic plague had shut down theatres in London and driven the population indoor. From a distance of 400 years, Shakespeare is now inspiring his admirers to spend the lockdown with theatre. You could create a masterpiece, as he did, or watch one on YouTube as he could not. Here's what's playing:

THE NATIONAL THEATRE

WHERE: YOUTUBE

As the National Theatre, UK's premier arts organisation, began streaming *One Man, Two Guvnors*, on April 2, 14 lakh viewers from around the world put aside the gloom of isolation and laughed. Actor James Corden won a Tony Award in 2012 for his role as a perennially hungry servant, Francis Henshall, in this production. National Theatre will put out a play every Thursday at 7 pm UK time — 11.30 pm in India. *Jane Eyre* comes up on April 9. Charlotte Bronte's novel is reimagined as the quest of a strong-willed woman to live on her own terms. The following week features a gender-balanced adaptation of *Treasure Island*, starring Arthur Darvill. The final play on the list is *Twelfth Night*, William Shakespeare's tale of music, love, shipwreck, disguises and a cruel joke.

SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE

WHERE: GLOBE PLAYER

On April 6, Shakespeare's Globe in London will present *Hamlet*, in which the Prince of Denmark looks out at a darkened hall, packed with unseen people, and claims, "Now I am alone." For billions of people across the globe, who are surrounded by many but also separated from them, the scene is a powerful metaphor of the times. Shakespeare's Globe is no stranger to shutdowns. In the early 17th century, as the bubonic plague laid siege on London, the historic playhouse was almost always closed. As a new disease quarantines people across the world, Shakespeare's Globe has announced that six of its plays will be available free on the theatre's video-on-demand service, the Globe Player. Apart from *Hamlet*, these are *Romeo & Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Winter's Tale, The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The free films will rotate every two weeks, one at a time.

Tristram Kenton

BOLSHOI THEATRE

WHERE: YOUTUBE

Its doors are shut but Moscow's majestic Bolshoi Theatre has opened its window for online audiences. Some of Bolshoi's finest works, featuring its stylised performances and stagecraft, are now available on YouTube — *Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Tsar's Bride* were featured last month. Coming up next, on April 7, is *Boris Godunov*, based on an iconic protagonist of Russian opera — a Tsar tormented by his history of murder. *The Nutcracker*, a magical tale of Christmas Eve, when all toys come to life, will be broadcast on April 10. The shows start at 7 pm Russia time — 9.30 pm in India — and recordings are available for 24 hours.

THE SHOW MUST GO ONLINE

WHERE: YOUTUBE PAGE OF ROB MYLES

The pandemic has kept actors away from the theater but couldn't keep theatre away from actors. Though the stage is missing, there's always Zoom. British performer Robert Myles is connecting with amateur and professional actors online to livestream readings of the complete works of William Shakespeare in the order they are believed to have been written. The initiative is titled The Show Must Go Online. It started with *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, featuring performers from London, Dallas and New York, among others. The dramatic reading — with astute voice modulations and a gamut of gestures and expressions — bring alive the themes that Shakespeare explores in his later works, such as love, friendship and infidelity. It was watched by more than 35,000 viewers from across the world. It was followed by *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Henry VI, Part 1*. The second and third parts of the *Henry VI* series will be read on April 9 and 16, respectively. The readings will continue till November 26, with *Henry VIII*.

SOFA SHAKESPEARE

WHERE: FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE

Do you want to act in a Shakespeare play? An unconventional theatre experiment is enabling people in quarantine from all over the world to do just that. Titled Sofa Shakespeare, the project, which is the brainchild of US-based Julia Giolzetti, invites participants to submit a minute-long video of themselves performing an extract from a pre-decided play. Giolzetti edits the videos into a single performance and uploads it online. The result is a quirky patchwork of a play that features many actors and homes from world over. *Romeo and Juliet* begins with Giolzetti presenting the sombre prologue — "Two households, both alike in dignity/ In fair Verona, where we lay our scene" — when her dog suddenly starts licking her face. Dodging it, she valiantly completes the scene. Some performers evoke the mood of their dialogues with astute diction and mood lighting while others have children, pets, puppets and unfinished chores in the frame. The second play, *Twelfth Night*, features several students from the Drama School Mumbai. The next play is *Titus Andronicus*. If you want to be a part of Sofa Shakespeare, fill the form that is available on the project's Facebook page.

ON THE LOOSE

Logging in to Learn

Digital education is here to stay

LEHER KALA

MY DAUGHTER'S first day of class 4 was attended facing a phone, where she got a glimpse of her classmates for the first time in a month. The new class teacher introduced herself, gently explaining how the Zoom classes were going to work. The eight-year-olds, excited by the novelty of 'distance learning', a term we're going to be hearing a lot in the coming months, began their introduction to Social Studies with synchronised video instruction. There were question and answer sessions, where instead of raising their hands, they pointed a finger to the camera. Later, when this nightmare is over and sociologists will evaluate the lasting impact the coronavirus had on our lives, education is bound to feature prominently. In a matter of weeks, COVID-19 has changed how students are learning around the world, providing ideas on how schools in India can change in the long term.

A college going teenager I know participates in a long distance class at her university in the US, with a partner, a student from Peru, also facing lockdown. Children in Delhi are doing Bharatanatyam via video links. Before the pandemic this would have sounded like a new-age gimmick but this crisis has pushed everyone to innovate. Maybe there is a good enough alternative to all that time spent commuting to various classes. In countries facing political upheavals like Iran and Nigeria, Google Classroom is the norm, providing reading material and tools to keep children in the loop. In India, while the threat of Corona looms for the rest of the year at the very least, Zoom is the new reality. Parents, teachers and children have to prepare for localised closures randomly, maybe even the possibility of schools not reopening till after October.

Coping with COVID-19 is particularly complicated for any educational institution. We may be in the midst of a 21-day lockdown but it's not as if on the 22nd day things are going back to what they were. No, children will not magically return to school, until new protocols regarding health and safety are set. No one yet knows what they may be. Even in the normal scheme of things, schools are a den of infection. It's not uncommon to hear that once one kid gets a flu, the entire class picks it up. Children, the younger ones especially, can't be trained to socially distance. They share tiffins, travel in buses and gather on playgrounds and for assemblies. In such a peculiar situation, when all the research says that a pandemic can best be controlled by avoiding crowds, the school model has to be completely re-evaluated.

Massive change occurs only in deep crisis. No doubt, COVID-19 has been a huge catalyst in forcing everybody to utilise technology. At the same time, it exposes the deep divide between who has bandwidth and who doesn't. Kids with parents who are digitally savvy have a huge advantage over those who don't. Also, while it is something to marvel at, that my daughter was in a remote village in Garhwal and having a Math lesson interacting with her friends and teachers, this is hardly ideal. Small children don't have the concentration to sit in front of a computer for long periods. They need teacher supervision in real time. Let us not underestimate the value of slyly passing notes to friends. When I look back fondly at my school days, it's not the lessons I remember. School is about the relationships you make and the life skills you pick up by interacting with kids from different backgrounds. Classes may have transitioned online, a welcome innovation in the short term, but the rich day-to-day experience of school — in recess — is where a lot of learning also happens.

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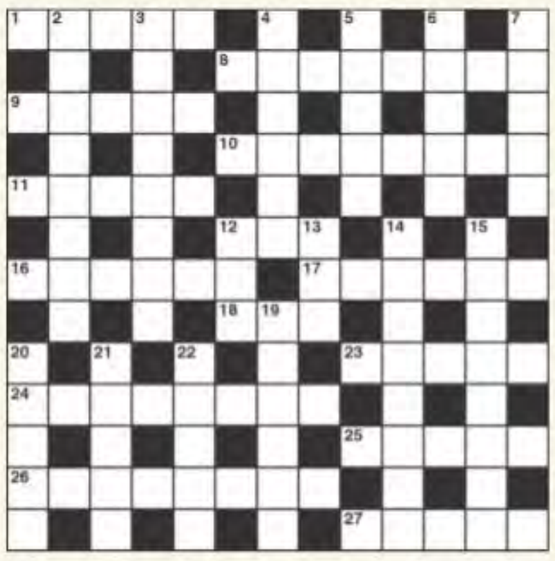
CROSSWORD 4084



ACROSS

1 Look back into the Middle Ages for capital savers (5)
8 and 23 Across: A touching tale, perhaps? (4,4,5)
9 What disciplinarians applied to the back parts (5)
10 He comes in to wait in the finish (2,3,3)
11 Direct transport (5)
12 It's somewhat unsound currency (3)
16 Attitude adopted by a driver of course (6)
17 Pin inserted into a joint (6)
18 Born of woman (3)
23 See 8 Across
24 Brought down average, in actual fact (8)
25 Donne has been translated quite a lot (2,3)
26 I'd be back in a sort of orange fabric (8)
27 Less than pleased with the contract (5)

DOWN

2 Whole eternity blown to bits (8)
3 Places along the line (8)
4 Leading Cuban actors in parts (6)
5 How pointless to follow a girl in a state (5)
6 Ponders sources of inspiration (5)
7 Accidentally slips a little butter on board (5)
12 Three ways to make money in Japan (3)
13 Utilise part of the museum (3)
14 Not a working institution (4,4)
15 Directions for making machine parts (8)
19 It provides cover for a pupil (6)
20 I do it wrongly, being a fool (5)
21 I'm taking a long time to make this representation (5)
22 A popular place to get spirits (5)

Solutions Crossword 4083: Across: 1 Capitalist, 6 Word, 10 Strip, 11 Nominates, 12 Amperage, 13 Theta, 15 Eatable, 17 Spender, 19 Parsnip, 21 Deadpan, 22 Rumba, 24 Response, 27 Say no more, 28 Tutti, 29 Smew, 30 Empty words. **Down:** 1 Case, 2 Perimeter, 3 Tepee, 4 Linkage, 5 Simpers, 7 Outre, 8 Despairing, 9 Anathema, 14 Key phrases, 16 Bungalow, 18 Depositor, 20 Perform, 21 Descent, 23 Maybe, 25 On tow, 26 Bids.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis

CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson

MARVIN by Tom Armstrong

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)
There's great optimism in your chart today and, in my opinion, you can exploit it to the full. If you meet what seems like an insurmountable obstacle, you may overcome it by sheer belief. In the end, you may be forced to slow down, relax and put your feet up.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)
Pull out all the stops and, whatever else happens, don't allow anyone to convince you that your ideas and schemes are impractical. Actually, the twist is that it doesn't matter whether they're practical or not. What is important is your ability to improve the quality of your life in any way that suits you.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
Mercury's curious motion now affords you the perfect opportunity to give time and thought to what can only be described as affairs of the heart. Don't shy away from analysing your feelings, for if you understand your desires then you'll also realise why you are attracted to a certain sort of person.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)
I know it takes an enormous amount of courage to let go and walk away from difficult situations, but the result will be a massive growth in your self-confidence. You will have realised that you really do have the power to free yourself from the past.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)
You are now in the closing stages of planetary alignments more inherently helpful than any which are due to return until well into the next decade. Your goal now is to turn the world on its head, transforming lingering problems into major advantages.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)
It's good to spare some time for monetary matters, although not to the exclusion of everything else. Do pay very great attention to partners' wants and needs. You've been behaving like a person in a great hurry recently, but have you really thought about where you're going? Pause for a moment — and ponder.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)
Obviously this is a tricky time for finances but, then, what's new? One thing I can promise is that recent problems lie firmly in the past, and that you may now get on and make a few very wise longterm decisions. That doesn't mean life won't be free of difficulties — it's just that they'll be different ones.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)
You may be in the mood for fun. Even if you're at work, the key to a productive day is creative self-expression. This means you've got to do what you want, and the authorities had better realise it. Mind you, don't imagine that you're always right. You're not.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)
Matters close to home still require your attention, so do be prepared to rise to the challenge at a moment's notice. Remember that it's in the nature of today's sensitive lunar alignments that you require extra sympathy and affection. But use your intuition wisely.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)
Try to remember that current planetary activity complements your financial prospects — and keep your hopes up. Even what now seem to be highly unlikely possibilities will look very different by the beginning of next week. Nothing is for ever, despite what it feels like at the time.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)
The important thing in your life at the moment is partnership. Beyond the daily ups and downs of your various emotional and professional relationships lies the fundamental issue of what you actually are looking for from other people. It could be financial security — and there's nothing wrong with that.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)
Stay busy, keep active and don't duck out of responsibilities now. As far as financial affairs are concerned, I'd say that you have about a week left in which to take the initiative and sort out a whole host of complications. After that, you'll have to shift the burden on to others.

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 quip.

Words are_____. - Jean-Paul Sartre (6,7)

SSAEO

AIOSS

BEULLT

EENDDP

SOLUTION: OASES, OASIS, BULLET, DEPEND
Answer: Words are **loaded pistols**. - Jean-Paul Sartre

SUDOKU 4171

Difficulty Level 5s

Instructions

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

Difficulty Level

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

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 4170

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

We will definitely get more time to prepare now. Since it is more than a year, so I believe we will get a new foreign coach. If Olympics would have happened this year, then we wouldn't have got since for 3-4 months it wouldn't make sense. But now, BAI might get one to help us."

CHIRAG SHETTY,
BADMINTON DOUBLES PLAYER

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

THOSE MONTHS THOSE MINUTES

JULY 9, 2011
"Even with a perfect 30, often the best you can do is a tie."

JULY 10
"We were the better team and should have won."

Once upon a time in Turin

Deepika Kumari was 17 and a World junior champion in 2011. Then she jammed with Laishram Bombayla Devi and Chekrovolu Swuro to win India its first big global medal — a silver at the Team Worlds to raise hopes of an Olympic medal in archery.

TUSHAR BHADURI

"MAIN BOHOT chhoti thi tab (I was very young then)," is Deepika Kumari's constant refrain when asked to jog back her memory to the 2011 World Archery Championships in Turin.

Deepika had been anointed the face of Indian archery since the time she burst onto the scene, and it's easy to forget that she is still just 25. The journey that started in 2009 with the Cadet and then Youth World Championships, and took centerstage at the Commonwealth Games at home a year later, has seen several ups and downs. It was alleged that her early success went to her head and distracted her from the sport, and she was even written off at one point.

But whenever the Tokyo Games are held, Deepika is likely to make her third Olympic trip after she secured a quota berth at the Continental Qualifying Tournament in Bangkok last year, competing as an independent athlete with the Indian archery body suspended owing to administrative turmoil. The bid for a spot in the women's recurve team event is currently at the mercy of the coronavirus pandemic.

Breaking the psychological barrier

The Turin Worlds in July 2011, where India won the silver medal in the women's team event, was one of the few occasions when the Indians managed to get the better of the pre-eminent force in archery – the mighty Korea. "I was very young at the time (just 17), but remember being very happy that our good form had continued over a long time. After the double gold at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in October, we had won a bronze at the Guangzhou Asian Games a few weeks later. It was my first World Championship as a senior, so I felt all the more special," recalls Deepika, who was part of the team that repeated the feat four years later in Copenhagen.

Terrific trio

The team of Deepika, Laishram Bombayla Devi and Chekrovolu Swuro stayed together for a long time. They were the ones to climb the podium in Italy and secure berths for the Olympics. They were considered by many to be contenders for a medal in London as well, but faltered at the big stage.

"We have known each other for a long time and share a good understanding and compatibility. We became friends in 2009 during the pre-CWG camp and stayed together. Bom di (Bombayla) has been there from the start while Chekrovolu has been there off and on," the girl from Jharkhand says.

Just enjoy

Being in her teens at that stage meant archery for her was all about just aiming at the target and enjoying. "We had our preparatory camp in Kolkata before a selection trial. We enjoyed a lot during the tournament in Italy," is all Deepika remembers.

However, the individual recurve event didn't go to plan. Deepika came ninth in the qualification round, based on which the match-ups for the elimination face-offs are decided. She breezed through the first two rounds, but went down to Poland's Natalia Lesniak in the third by the slenderest of margins. Her two teammates also exited the competition at the same stage. The Indian male archers didn't provide much to write home about either, losing in the first round of the team event.

Teamwork pays off

Everything now depended on the recurve team event. Eight Olympic spots were available with 16 teams in fray, meaning winning one round would not only take the team to London but also the three archers into the individual draw for the Games.

A 216-213 win over France booked the Indians' ticket to the Olympics before a 203-197 success over Denmark put them in a semifinal against the mighty Koreans.

"The Koreans are very strong but not unbeatable on any given day. It depends on who shoots with better control and precision. But anything less than 28-29 from three arrows and you don't have a chance against them. Why, sometimes even with a perfect 30 the best you can do is a tie," Deepika feels.

Ki Bo Bae would go on to win the individual and team gold medals at the London Olympics but on that day in Turin, she along with Jung Dasomi and Han Gyeong-Hee fell short 216-212 to the Indian trio.

> "We were the better team and should have won. But sometimes you lose focus. On a bad day, the pressure gets to you and you become extremely nervous."

Gold slips through the fingers

India were now in the World Championships final, against the hosts. There had not been an Indian gold medallist at the elite event ever and Deepika, Bombayla and Chekrovolu were considered favourites to break the duck against Italy.

"We were the better team and should have won," the youngest of the three reminisces with some regret. "But sometimes you lose focus. On a bad day, the pressure gets to you and you become nervous. There were a couple of 7s and a 6 that probably changed the course of the final," Deepika says, before adding "but you cannot blame an individual. We win as a team and also lose as a team."

But she recalls that the Indians were ahead for a long time before squandering the advantage. "It felt like the gold medal was about to come around our necks before it was taken away. We were very disappointed."

Apart from Natalia Valeeva, who finished above Deepika in the qualification round, the other two Italians – Jessica Tomasi and Guendalina Sartori – weren't formidable names. Ask about the home advantage, and Deepika is reluctant to give too much weightage to that factor. "The home crowd definitely helps – we all know how it worked to our advantage at the 2010 Delhi Commonwealth Games – but it all comes down to how you handle the situation.

"However, after the initial disappointment, we were happy to have won a medal and qualify for the Olympics. We were welcomed with much fanfare on our return to India," she says.

Meanwhile, India is still waiting for its first World Championship gold. The men's recurve team lost to China in the 2019 final in the Netherlands.

Team bonding

Ask her about the success of the Indian trio and Deepika points to the camaraderie. "If you have good co-ordination and trust in each other, that's half the battle won. Sometimes, one of the archers is down on confidence. It is then up to the other two to motivate her and give her confidence."

It's all about handling the given situation, she feels. "Everyone gets nervous. It's how you react to it that matters. That's where bonding and teamwork comes into play. You need to know how your teammate will react to a particular situation. It's up to the archers to support each other because during a match, the coach takes a backseat."

Another vital aspect of team archery is the sequence of shooters – who will go first, second and last.

"It's decided by the archers themselves, based on their comfort levels. Generally, the most confident one at that time goes first. If she is able to give the team a good start, it takes a lot of pressure off the other two. The second archer is the one who generally takes a bit longer than the others, implying that the third one has to then cover up. It's crucial because the three arrows have to be shot within two minutes," Deepika says.

"We generally decide the sequence at the selection trials after the team is decided. During my career, I have gone both first and last."

BRIEFLY

Ecclestone wants F1 championship cancelled

BERNIE ECCLESTONE said this season's Formula One championship should be cancelled because it appears unlikely that enough races can be completed for it to be valid due to the coronavirus crisis. "We should stop the championship this year and start again next year, hopefully, because I can't see it's going to be possible to get the right amount of races in that count for a championship," he told *BBC Radio.*

Walker faces probe for flouting lockdown

KYLE WALKER is facing disciplinary action from Manchester City despite apologising after breaching coronavirus lockdown conditions even though he advised people to stay at home. It was reported that Walker held a party at home last week, breaking the government's rules on social distancing. "I understand my position as a professional footballer brings the responsibility of being a role model," Walker said.

India submits bid to host AFC Asian Cup

INDIA HAS submitted its bid documents for hosting the AFC Asian Cup in 2027, a top official of the national federation confirmed on Sunday. If India wins the bid, it will be the first time the country will host the continental showpiece event. "We have already submitted our expression of interest to the AFC (Asian Football Confederation). That is what's required as of now," AIFF General Secretary Kushal Das told *PTI.*

East Bengal signs winger Omid Singh

EAST BENGAL on Sunday signed Indian-origin Iranian midfielder Omid Singh for a two-year deal. "Omid has signed with us for two years. He will join us once the next season starts," East Bengal top official Debabrata Sarkar said here. The 29-year-old left-winger, who originally hails from Punjab and holds an Indian passport, currently plies his trade fir Naft Masjed Soleyman FC in the Persian Gulf Pro League. **AGENCIES**

Premier League players reject 30% salary cut

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, APRIL 5

THE ENGLISH Premier League players rejected a move Sunday by clubs to cut their wages by 30% during the coronavirus pandemic, escalating a bitter public row as their union claimed the government would lose out on more than 200 million pounds (around $245 million) in tax.

"This would be detrimental to our NHS (National Health Service) and other government-funded services," the Professional Footballers' Association said in a statement.

Taking on the Premier League as a whole, the PFA said the 20 million pounds being given to the NHS by the world's richest football competition was "welcome, but we believe it could be far bigger."

The union's strident stance came after further talks Saturday involving clubs and the league as Liverpool became the latest Premier League side defying political anger by using a government bailout scheme to furlough some non-playing staff.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock had told players at clubs furloughing staff to take a pay cut. Sports minister Nigel Huddleston reminded the Premier League to ensure it "helps the national effort."

Liverpool, which leads the league by 25 points, followed fellow 2019 Champions League finalist Tottenham, Bournemouth, Newcastle and Norwich in furloughing staff.

Under a job retention scheme implemented to help businesses survive the national lockdown, staff can be put on furlough and receive 80% of their salaries from the government, up to a maximum of $3,000 a month.

Liverpool said it would top up salaries to ensure staff still received the full amount but that still means using public funds to pay some staff.

Former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher called that a "poor" move, saying "respect and goodwill is lost" by the club.

The Premier League said the season will return when conditions are deemed 'safe'.

Rooney says handling of pay row 'a disgrace'

London: Former England captain Wayne Rooney said the public pressure being exerted on elite footballers to take pay cuts in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic is a "disgrace", according to a report in the *Sunday Times.* "How the past few days have played out is a disgrace," Rooney wrote. "First the health secretary ... said Premier League players should take a pay cut. Was he desperate to divert attention from his government's handling of this pandemic?," he said. "It feels as if it's to shame the players — to force them into a corner where they have to pick up the bill for lost revenue. Whatever way you look at it, we're easy targets," he added. **REUTERS**

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